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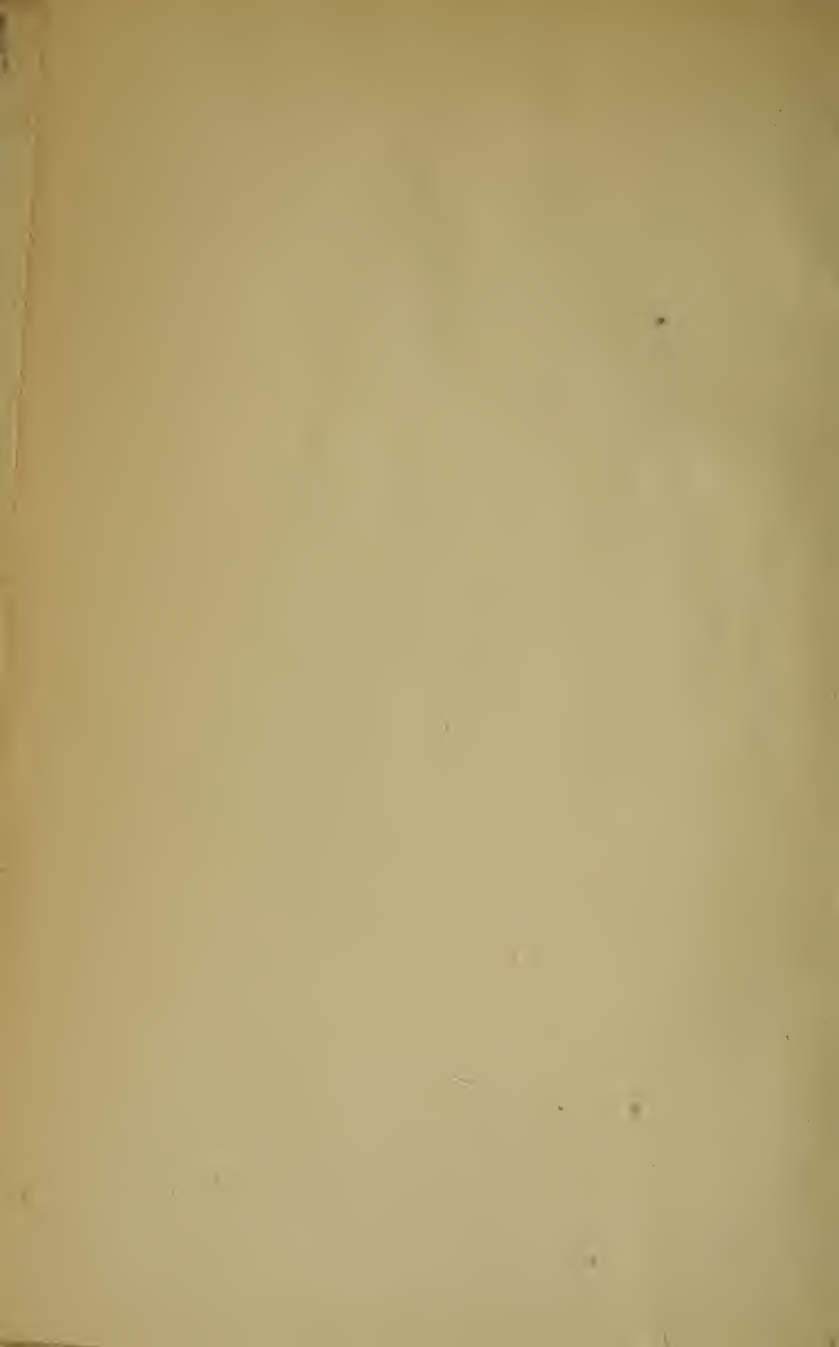
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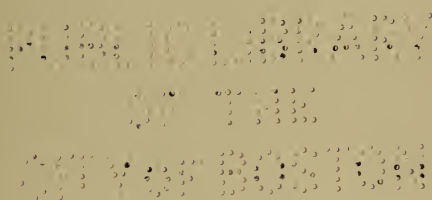
PAINTING IN EAST AND WEST

PAINTING IN EAST AND WEST

BY

ROBERT DOUGLAS NORTON

AUTHOR OF 'THE CHOICE'



LONDON
EDWARD ARNOLD
1913

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P R E F A C E

THE ruins of the great Temple of Karnac have been laid bare by gangs of Egyptian boys, carrying off in baskets on their backs the débris beneath which the giant columns had for centuries lain hidden ; and to any of these small workers it might fall to unearth some fresh wonder of decoration. So an obscure delver among the accretions which the stream of time ever piles up upon ideas might come, by a happy chance, upon a half forgotten or neglected truth. Some vague ambition of the kind is perhaps the only justification to be advanced for adding yet another to the books on painting which already fill more than five large pages of the London Library Subject Index ;—and that without taking account of the vast numbers of more

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ephemeral works which emerge almost weekly from the Press. At the best it may help to remove the earth cumbering some fertile thought, and set free fancies which will help others to creation; at the worst it can but remain unnoticed and be soon forgotten. Books about painting are indeed countless, but for the most part they either deal with particular painters and schools, or concern themselves with the philosophical aspects of Art. What is rarer is an aim something midway between the two—a work based upon sufficient familiarity with individual artists and their schools to facilitate the search for general principles applicable to all, and at the same time free enough from the technicalities of regular books on æsthetics to be popular, and sufficiently in touch with them not to lose sight of essential points. There is of course the danger that such a purpose, appealing neither to one school of expert nor the other, may fall to the ground between the two. Yet

PREFACE

there is a large Public deeply interested in pictures but unused to formulate or attempt to answer sundry fundamental questions in regard to them ; such questions, for instance, as what should be looked for in a picture, and why certain qualities give pleasure ; why taste changes with the widening of experience, and why the pleasure which springs from some pictures lasts while that of others speedily palls ; whether there is an unvarying touchstone, and if so what : whether one medium is superior to others ; how far subject counts ; and any number of similar queries.

Among this Public there may be some who would find help in the reflections of a plain man pretending to no deep acquaintance with theories of æsthetics, but loving colour and form, familiar enough with pencil and brush to take account of the difficulties, and never neglectful of such opportunities for comparison as wanderings in many lands have placed within his reach. Inquiry into

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these problems might also, incidentally, throw useful light on some of the technical phrases current among critics and glibly used by many others who would be hard put to it to explain them.

Finally, such an inquiry, if it revealed shortcomings, might suggest remedies. The lack of spirituality in Western Art is one of the ideas commonly spoken of as 'being in the air.' If the criticism be shown to be well founded, another stone may have been added to the foundations of that great edifice which the world is waiting for the Art of the future to erect.

R. D. N.

September, 1913.

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INTRODUCTORY

‘ All nature is but Art, unknown to thee ;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see ;
All discord, harmony not understood ;
All partial evil, universal good.’

—POPE

I. INTRODUCTORY

IN one of the happy passages where Stevenson sits and thinks aloud for our benefit, he raises once more an eternal question of relative values in human affairs.

‘If you ask yourself what you mean by fame, riches or learning, the answer is far to seek ; and you go back into that kingdom of light imaginations, which seem so vain in the eyes of Philistines perspiring after wealth, and so momentous to those who are stricken with the disproportions of the world, and in the face of the gigantic stars, cannot stop to split differences between the degrees of the infinitesimally small, such as a tobacco pipe or the Roman Empire, a million of money or a fiddlestick’s end.’

This is indeed ‘the very humour of all

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social heresy.' In this kingdom of light imaginations, things flimsier than action give the scale. Battles and thrones and riches pale like shadows before the majesty of ideas ; standards of measurement are overturned.—All the reflective know these seismic moments. And even 'when the mood changes, the weathercock goes about,' an uneasy doubt remains : we are no longer so certain of our definitions. Things such as progress, the very aims we shall henceforth set out to achieve, need reinvestigation. We may continue to render lip-service to the ideals of the majority and see salvation in the development of the earth's riches, in an orderly universe of plenty, good houses and sanitation, in evenly distributed work and wealth ; but something will remain unsatisfied. Dreams of the poet and the visionary, who believe in no material solution but would fain weave for the toiling a background against which the concrete facts of life shall lose their harshness, no longer seem

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entirely fantastic. The antithesis of material and spiritual, comfort and beauty, prose and poetry, utilitarian and ornamental, is not so easily resolved in terms of the former. The very connotations of greatness shift and change. Homer and Æschylus, Shakespeare and Dante, are landmarks standing above a plain where but for their song the monuments of generals and kings and statesmen would long since have sunk to the level of common graves. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*. Were it not for a humble poet some other Helen than she of Troy would symbolise for all time the might of woman's loveliness: Menelaus and Priam, Achilles and Hector would share the obscurity of a million unsung heroes of Babylon and Thebes and Carthage. Succeeding generations commonly enough dethrone those whom their contemporaries delight to honour. But a Keats, a Milton or a Shakespeare is an ever fixed mark in the firmament whence one by one great ones of their day

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decline towards the engulfing horizon-line. Once far enough removed, even the crowd does not fail to distinguish the fixed and glittering fires from the shooting stars that cross the vault of Heaven, and the nebulae that veil its depths. But, near at hand, it is dazzled by the short-lived glamour and pomp and swiftness of the lesser lights.

It seems as though it were the creator, the artist, who can longest withstand the ravages of time: but his immortality is commonly bought at the price of obscurity, and worse, in life. More especially is this true among Western races, who since the Renaissance have grown to set less and less store by their artists. The lives of some of the greatest—one long unending struggle against misunderstanding and neglect—are there in testimony.

Turner and Millet and Beethoven fared but as countless lesser creators have fared. The tragedies of Chatterton, John Davidson and Richard Middleton

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can be matched in other lands and in every field of Art.

Our new-born splendid zeal for redressing inequalities is intolerant, in its single-minded fervour, of what it regards as a by-product, rooted in antiquity, the diversion of a coterie, a luxury of the wealthy, a thing outside the daily life and needs of the people. Social reformers regard Art with suspicion, even with hostility. Parliaments do little or nothing for its encouragement. Among the well-to-do it cannot compete with the rivalry of sport or money-getting or politics. Scanty is the leisure for pursuits that do not fall within the category of the practical and the utilitarian.

We have travelled far from the time when clamorous crowds carried a great painting in triumph through the streets. It is indeed hard to imagine a work of Art greeted by the twentieth century as an event of public importance. Still more remote is the era when a popular

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audience could weigh the merits of rival tragedies, in a contest where such an one as Æschylus was only able to secure the second place.

It is likely enough that if Greece had applied to exact science the imaginative and creative gifts which she expended upon the Arts, she would have come upon some of the material discoveries which have transformed the face of our universe. If instead of the Parthenon, the plays of the great tragedians, the statues of Pheidias and Praxiteles, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, the eloquence of Demosthenes, Athens had given us steam and electricity, would the world have been richer or poorer? The answer hangs upon the scale of values we adopt. There can be little doubt of the verdict which a poll of the electorate would yield: but the matter is not so easily to be disposed of, even on a purely utilitarian basis.

Progress, which is the victory of the higher over the lower instincts, is

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achieved in the ratio of man's power to get outside himself, to feel sympathy with what is other than his own personality and interests, in other words, of the power of his imagination. What influence here so great as that of Art? The rôle of Art is to detach phenomena from their background, rolling back the mist that at first blurs their outlines, that imagination may forthwith seize upon and fashion them; and, having fashioned, set its creations for comparison beside crude facts. So, gradually, is man enabled to put himself in the place of others, and make their joys and sorrows his own. Scales drop from his eyes hitherto sealed to the facts not directly affecting himself. Imagination, kindled by Art, brings strange and unfamiliar aspects of life within his ken, and sets him meditating upon them. And from meditation springs altruism; thence progress; and hand-in-hand with these the sense of beauty.

‘When in some frescoed fane, or

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pillared sunlit portico, the child of Leto stood upon his pedestal, those who passed by, *διὰ λαμπροτάτου βαίνοντες ἀβρῶς αἰθέρος*, became conscious of a new influence that had come across their lives, and dreamily, or with a sense of strange and quickening joy, went to their homes or daily labour, or wandered, it may be, through the city gates to that nymph-haunted meadow where young Phaedrus bathed his feet, and lying there in the soft grass, beneath the tall wind-whispering palms and flowering agnus castus, began to think of the wonder of beauty, and grew silent with unaccustomed awe.'

It was Art which brought man to self-consciousness, and showed him to himself; which abstracted events and objects from the accident of circumstance and called attention to their heroic and their beautiful aspects; which conferred upon the gods their immortality and upon man his soul. Hitherto phenomena had been isolated, disconnected, as they enter the consciousness of a child. Art brought

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system into being, and forthwith the scattered army of facts fell into order, each unit in relation to the rest.

The Homeric songs, ringing with the prowess of heroes, fresh with the dew of a simpler, manlier age, furnished a standard by which later epochs still measured themselves, and to which they tried to attain. The great tragedies, telling of Fate inexorable, of human suffering and endurance, of the relentless law of expiation; of friendship, and filial pity, of the mingling of fierce passions, of love and hatred and revenge, held up a mirror in which for the first time human nature could stand apart and contemplate its own likeness in the unflattered garb of truth. The great statues of the gods, in the image of man, but free from the accidents of human imperfection, stood aloof in their Olympian serenity and seemed to gaze out beyond the petty doings of the little ephemeral beings they overlooked, to a sublime and tranquil shore whereon the harassed

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mortal, his strivings ended, might one day hope to land. Before Greece, man was a wayward child wandering at random through the fields of life ; after, he was come to sudden maturity. Such was his debt to Art. Without it neither philosophy nor laws nor institutions could have reared the great edifice from which every later age has drawn inspiration.

So with that second flowering-time which came after the lapse of centuries—that outburst of creativeness in which all men had their part, if but the passive part of admiration and wonder—Humanity made a fresh leap forward, as swift as the leap of summer out of winter in Northern climes : but like the former period it was short-lived. A century or two, and Art had passed out of the central focus of light and interest to the obscurity of the circumference.

These great periods of artistic productiveness came when the world's

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mechanical and material development was still in its infancy. Whether or no there be causal connection in the fact, the advance of material progress has coincided with the wane of artistic production. Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of painting—the Art which conjures with line and colour and compels them to express in permanent form the emotions that transient visions of beauty arouse.

In Renaissance Italy, not only were great artists sought out by kings and prelates but they were public characters, known to and esteemed by the people. For every painter working at a given moment then, a thousand could be produced to-day: but appreciation, no longer an universal heritage, has become the prerogative of the few. Indeed, the wider the practice of painting, the narrower might its comprehension almost be said to have become. Those who to-day enjoy and understand are what earlier times would have named virtuosi,

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and constitute almost a sect apart. The initiate, if they be not endowed with a special faculty akin to the tea-taster's, have only gained admittance after rigorous training. If not themselves artists, they know the nature of the problems and can discern both the subtler triumphs and the easy victories of technique. They must needs be able to detect purpose and judge of sincerity in execution; balance conception with achievement; combine a knowledge of the old with an open mind towards the new. But to do all this is to be half an artist. In Italy at the time of the Renaissance there was no need for so wide a range. The sense of plastic beauty, now dulled by the very multiplicity of methods of reproduction, was alert. Joy in an Art once more directly related to and comparable with Nature was within the reach of all; especially when that Art was concerned with spiritual interests both universal and sincere.

Thus painting at its era of rebirth in

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Europe was, in the truest sense, popular—if the word be taken to mean ‘of direct interest to the people.’ Is its present lack of popularity inevitable? How has it come to pass that painting, which, for the people, is the easiest and most accessible of the Arts, has so far lost touch with them as almost to have passed outside their ken? The pictorial sense is as alive as ever. Every cottage has some form of picture upon its walls. Illustration is ubiquitous. Is there no means of turning this universal faculty to good account and conducting back into a truer channel the many divergent runnels with which the stream has become split up?

It is to the investigation of these questions that the following pages will be devoted.

SURVEY OF
CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

‘So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us.’

Hyperion.

II. SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY PAINTING

I. OFFICIAL PAINTING.

WE can hardly begin otherwise than by consideration of what may be called 'official' painting; the painting, I mean, which has satisfied the standard required for admission to the walls of National Salons and Academies. Whether or no such exhibitions be representative of the most living movements in painting, they certainly are so in the eyes of that majority of the public whose annual tribute to Art is rendered by a formal visit to them. The artist is perforce dependent on his public for inspiration as well as support; and the work on these walls may be taken to be what

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the public wants, in so far as it has artistic wants, or seeks to satisfy them in modern fields. If not what the public wants, it is practically all that a large section of the public ever knows about Art.

It thus has a two-fold value for our inquiry. It stands officially for the country's highest artistic output at any given moment ; and supplies a standard for gauging the level of the public mind in æsthetic matters.

Work so multifarious in subject, conception, and execution can hardly be fairly pronounced on in the mass. Even the widest sweep of the critic's net must let much individual achievement through its meshes if anything like general characterisation be aimed at. It is to be presumed that the public which annually flocks in its thousands to see these exhibitions (and these only) finds there food for admiration ; and equally it is certain that it is the fashion for critics to speak of them, if not with open scorn, at any

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rate with condescending tolerance. The one is as slow to suspect that all is not well with official Art as the other to allow it any merit. Because the training of the schools has sometimes been observed to result in Academicism, such training is forthwith condemned ; but be its defects what they may, to jump from them to the conclusion that living Art is only to be looked for among the outlaws from rule and tradition is to treat logic with scant respect.

Still, there is a growing corpus of critical opinion, somewhat coloured, as is inevitable, by the ruling fashions, yet based upon knowledge of the great works of the past, whose verdict is probably the best obtainable by any particular generation on its own work. And it cannot be denied that this verdict is disparaging. Not unappreciative of technical merit, it appears to take for granted the absence of the higher gifts of inspiration and genius. It finds ground for deploring the expenditure of

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skill on sterile or misguided effort ; triviality of subject ; coarseness of execution ; slovenliness or dishonesty in detail ; and particularly does it lay stress upon one wide-spread short-coming—the lack of definite purpose.

Instead of lack of purpose it would perhaps be more accurate to speak of *diversity* of purpose, multiplied to a point at which the common factor is no longer discernible. What the critic thus articulates, the inexpert picture-lover only feels. But the bewilderment with which he emerges from a careful visit to one of these vast exhibitions commonly clears with reflection, leaving as its residuum a suspicion that general uncertainty of aim is the prevailing weakness. Trying to summarise his impressions he finds, alternating with repeated reminiscences of earlier schools, much experimental groping after new effects. There may be as little harm in the former as there may be actual merit in the latter, provided that the one be preserved from

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plagiarism, the other from extravagance. But, when all is said and done, the earlier masters are too much in evidence. It seems as though the great stream of European painting, arrested from onward movement, were flowing back upon itself through many well-worn channels. There is scarcely a school since Giotto of which some echo may not be caught. You will be reminded in turn of Italians, Flemish, Dutch and French. An attenuated Velasquez hangs next to a diluted Constable. The Pre-Raphaelites have as many imitators as the Barbizon group. There are would-be Turners, Gainsboroughs, Reynoldses; followers after Manet, weakly plagiarists of Whistler. Admirers of Rubens hang side by side with pupils of Pieter de Hoogh and Chardin.

One who should trouble to compile statistics would probably find landscape and portraiture between them constituting at least two-thirds of any modern exhibition. The majority of works falling

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under the latter of these heads can hardly lay claim to any definite pedigree—better, perhaps, if they could ! For it is in the portrait that the least desirable development of the painter's craft is to be seen. The weakness of humanity for looking on its own counterfeit presentment has become, with the spread of wealth, easy of gratification. A harmless enough piece of vanity, if you will ; —at the worst merely a little ridiculous ; but one that has had unfortunate consequences for Art. For it has brought painting into the clutches of modern industrialism. The portrait more than any other work of Art, so called, has become a thing subject to the law of supply and demand, and an article of commerce. It is an article that has been evolved by special needs having little or no relation to Art. It must satisfy eyes untrained for recognition of any but superficial resemblances. It must be respectful of detail, and at once servile in its rendering of likeness, and flattering.

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These are requirements easier complied with by the photograph than by the work of Art; and many modern portraits are closely akin to photography, skilfully enlarged and coloured. There are indeed photographs which by management of light, posing and general arrangement might more truthfully be termed works of Art than some of the portraits of which we are speaking.

Landscape, on the other hand—and under this heading come probably the largest number of works in any representative modern exhibition—undoubtedly contains a higher percentage of living work. There is much that is tame and commonplace; much tireless iteration of well-worn and familiar subjects; much that is pretty and characterless. But apart from all this, and from the imitators of bygone masters to whom we have referred, there is to be found here and there a sincere striving after truth, patient observation, an alert watching for the less familiar aspect of things, and

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an ambition to view with fresh eyes aspects already seized and many times recorded. Not that any of these qualities singly, or all of them in combination, will suffice to constitute a work of Art ; but it is safe to say that without them works of Art are unlikely to be produced.

The pictures that are neither portrait nor landscape are only a small part—a fifth, perhaps, or a sixth—of those exhibitions ; but what they lack in number they make up for in variety of subject. Indeed there seems nothing that moves, or has ever moved, beneath the stars, which is not laid under contribution. Inspiration is drawn from every continent and people ; from the tropics and the poles ; from the twilight hours and darkness, from moonlight and firelight. The whole range of history is ransacked. Canvases are made to relate anecdotes, point morals, provoke mirth, appeal to sentiment or pathos, move to devotion, speak in allegory. Episodes of sport on

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land and sea and river, episodes from the life of children, peasants and animals, are in turn drawn upon ; nor is there any form of 'still life' omitted.

That so unlimited a field is open, and is scoured so tirelessly by the modern painters, cannot but provoke comparison with the achievements of earlier masters on narrow and familiar lines. And the comparison may suggest a clue. Does not this uneasy search for novelty, this appeal to sentiments literary rather than aesthetic, this bidding for the favours of sensation-lovers, argue a poverty of invention and imagination, in the spectator first, but still more in the creator ? He that has vision and the power of expression needs not to go so far afield ; neither Alaska nor the Equator will teach him anything new. If he fail to discover fresh aspects in the most closely studied objects, it is waste of time to wander further. Does not this veriest commonplace lie at the root of the matter ? We are startled, amused or

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touched ; our curiosity is aroused ; and the interest thus awakened blinds us temporarily to the shallowness of vision or invention which seeks to offer us something else in lieu of a purely artistic emotion.

From this point many important vistas open out. With some of the problems to which they lead an attempt will be made to deal later. The present purpose is to review the facts, so far as may be, without prejudice or bias. That artists should be free and unrestricted in the choice of subject is a good rather than an evil. According to wide-held modern canons of Art subject is a matter of secondary or entirely negligible importance. Lionardo da Vinci, with his insatiable curiosity, would certainly have welcomed the extended range of opportunity which modern facilities of communication afford the artist ; but he would probably also have questioned the uses to which such increased opportunity is put.

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Let it be granted that, from their very dimensions, the exhibitions of which the French Salon and our own Royal Academy are the type, can hardly be viewed from a standpoint sufficiently remote or detached to admit of a comprehensive judgment. Still, it is difficult to resist the conviction that with all the cleverness, the manipulative dexterity, and the skill of superficial imitation, to be found among this work, the greater part of it is designed to appeal only to a vision that does not rise above the commonplace. It is destined for untrained eyes; eyes slow to recognise aught but the obvious and the proximate. It is the favour of the indiscriminating majority which is sought, not that of the competent few. There is lacking the element of *mind*, drawing to itself the mind of the spectator, and from their coalescence bringing the swift currents of imagination into play.

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II. OTHER MOVEMENTS ; THE P.R.B. :

THE BARBIZON SCHOOL

But Academies and Salons only stand, after all, for what we have called 'official' painting. If we are to follow the critics, we must seek for the more living Art elsewhere, among societies founded in intolerant protest against Academic rule ; in groups fused by the inspiration of a common aim, or rallying round the outstanding personality of a leader in revolt against convention. In its humbler forms it may be found shyly displayed in minor galleries and corners only known to the initiate ; where, frequently enough, unrecognised but living work in water-colour, in etching and black and white engraving, or pastel, as well as oil, is to be seen. Here doubtless the mental currents of which we spoke would oftener be set up. But this is the Art of the few, not of the many. Unvisited save by a few critics, and a handful more curious or discerning

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than their fellows, its very existence is ignored by the wider public.

No bare enumeration of the divers categories into which contemporary painting falls can be complete, even as an enumeration. For our purposes it need do no more than illustrate the initial statement that neither Art generally, nor painting in particular, is of great concern or interest in the popular life of to-day. By common consent there is much dead wood to be removed before the tree can resume its arrested growth, and push forth its branches widely enough to become once more a thing of note and beauty to all the land.

Can painting ever be a part of the popular life? it will be asked; and for those who have neither shillings for exhibitions, nor time, if they had, to visit them, a negative answer at present seems unavoidable. But if this large section of the community be for the moment eliminated, there remain the

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happier possessors of means and leisure whose indifference in artistic matters is a puzzling factor in modern civilisation. Whatever attention is given to Art, even by the small brotherhood of connoisseurs, is concentrated largely upon the old. Collectors argue, unanswerably, that the greatest masters belong to epochs long since closed ; and for the most part they are reluctant to mingle old with new. As to the rest, for one who knows Corot, Degas, Segantini, or Mathieu Maris (to take these names at random), there are twenty to whom Hobbema and Ruysdael are household words. But to use standards borrowed from other days, to measure by works that in their several lines approached perfection, is hardly fair treatment for the newer achievement. It reacts, as indeed it has reacted, upon the spirits of the painter ; and herein doubtless lies one cause of his insuccess. It is certain, on the other hand, that an Art which would be popular must be in touch with popular life. It must descend

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among the throng and familiarise itself with the pains and pleasures, the anxieties and ambitions, the loves and hates, of those whom it would interest. If it is to speak in a tongue that they shall understand, it must first attain to sympathy with them, and view life from their standpoint. And in doing so it need not descend to utter a language that is not its own ; for its station must be ever upon the heights. It must be felt, even in its lowliest utterance, to breathe forth some fragrance of an empyrean purity, to convey that which no words exactly can express, and which feeling rather than reason is to interpret. But for all that, it must know ; know the people in their limitations and their needs ; know where stealthily to creep in to rough and hardened hearts, and how to whisper comfort to the sorrow-stricken, and redress the balance of unequal fortune. It must identify itself with the lot of those to whom it would fain appeal. It must be at once their

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interpreter and their seer, revealing to the lowliest the bright impersonations of Beauty in their midst.

For Art is, as Professor Santayana has called it, 'the remodelling of nature by reason.' Facts that seem bound in hard-and-fastness, it must resolve and soften. It must give perspective, finding, for details that seem crude and unrelated, a setting wherein they too may help to fill the picture. Art only can diffuse an atmosphere about the hard face of circumstance, as the silveriness of London mists envelopes the shapeless vistas of yellow brick, and blends them with the traffic of the street and the overarching sky into one harmonious whole. Its business is to select and supplement, remoulding the imperfections of nature with a surer hand, revealing intention amid apparent chaos, hinting at perfect rounds where only the broken arc is visible. It speaks to imagination, evoking images that cold reason would for ever vainly seek to clothe with words.

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It must suggest system and method where a superficial eye sees only the random and the inco-ordinate. To Art the universal is everywhere apparent—in the lowliest plant or insect, the palace or the cottage, the joyless tract of ocean or of desert sand. It knows no isolated fact. But mystery veils its goings and its comings—a mystery as inscrutable to the initiate as to the untrained. Of exact learning it recks little, defying facts and figures, riding triumphant over rule and law. Dates and statistics, the dry bones of grammar and science, avail not a whit to confine its daring pinions in their flight from the trudging earth into the blue. Like the wind, it bloweth where it listeth, whispering sometimes to the humble where it passes the mighty by : for it knows no master.

Many have been the attempts to emerge from the *cul-de-sac* into which, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, painting was felt to have fallen. In England the Pre-Raphaelites instituted a

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movement which, though its strict principles were only observed by its founders, helped to infuse a new sincerity into painting, and fan the dulled embers of artistic enthusiasm. As with every new movement in Art, these renovators preached the return to nature, rupture with conventionality, close and faithful observation. They sought to free themselves from the sophistications of Academic tradition, to feel anew, and convey, the emotions inspiring primitive Art, ere yet feeling was submerged by the rivalry of technique. Yet in technique, too, they spared no pains to achieve the mastery without which not even the most poignant emotion can reach adequate expression. There was genius among them ; and accompanying it a sincerity and enthusiasm which was not long in overcoming the inevitable ridicule that awaits each new departure from convention. The brotherhood soon fell asunder. Some of its founders remained true to their principles ; some followed

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the bent of their own idiosyncrasies, or were lured to seek triumphs in more facile paths. Others, out of tune with a material age, turned to drink in the atmosphere of mediæval romance, and spun for themselves dreams of chivalry which, beautiful though they are, cloy somewhat by their beauty, divorced as it is often felt to be from actual life.

Yet the influence of the group remains, though the last of its members is no more and their methods and aims are superseded. It gave back for the time to Art a grace and dignity long wanting : re-kindled enthusiasm, and awakened the sleeping spirit of Poetry to lay her magic touch afresh upon familiar things. Those who remained true to the ideal of their fellowship are an example of single-minded honesty whereof their works will stand in reminder to artists of all time. Offshoots of the school still flourish ; and their influence doubtless lingers in men whose work no longer bears its outward trace.

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In France, about the same time, the little group of painters who gathered about Jean François Millet at Barbizon, gave a new impetus and direction to the painting of landscape. Hitherto in landscape human life had been represented chiefly by lay figures arranged in the required groupings about the foreground of a picture ; Millet made humanity his principal study. Nature and man he saw inseparably bound together. The labourer was a part of the fields he tilled, a part, with the air and sunshine, of the great overarching firmament. Millet drew him amid the recurring vicissitudes of his simple life ; at seed-time and harvest, with spade and reaping hook and flail ; at lambing-time and shearing ; ploughing and gleaning ; driving his beasts afield at sunrise, and following them slowly home when the long day was done. These children of the glebe Millet saw for what they are, the offspring, with crops and herds, of the old brown earth, to be gathered

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again, after a brief season, to her bosom, along with the stubble and the falling leaves.

And so he, and others with him,—Troyon, Rousseau, Daubigny, Corot, and the rest,—found a fresh setting for the life of the forest and the field. They drew aside the veil of appearances, and showed man in his true relation to the soil from which he springs. They looked at Nature with fresh eyes, and revealed her in many an unfamiliar garb. And in so doing they gave fresh powers of vision to all humanity: for men see commonly only that which they are accustomed to see, and know not, until the Angel of the Lord reveals it to them, that the mountain over against the city in which they lie beleaguered is full of horses and chariots of fire. What these French painters of Barbizon did, the brothers Maris, Mauve, Israels, and others did in Holland, and Segantini in the high valleys of the Alps. Human consciousness remains permanently en-

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riched by the attention thus first focussed upon various modes of lowly life lived close to Nature, and the range of sympathy is widened for many whose eyes remain closed until they are unsealed by Art.

The movement occupied only a corner of the field of Art. Its influence was perhaps more widely felt and lasting than that of the Pre-Raphaelites; but its founders soon carried it to the culminating point beyond which further progress is denied. On those precise lines the path was closed, as it always is closed by the achievement of perfection. Thereafter the alternative lies between imitation or change of direction. But the inspiration remains, to furnish ever new material to the changing eyes of endless generations of painters.

III. THE IMPRESSIONISTS

That in painting, as in all else, constant change is decreed, only signifies

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that here, too, evolution is supreme. With the enrichment of consciousness and the growth of knowledge the winding road we follow reaches ever a new turning-point from which wider and wider vistas are disclosed. If familiar themes are to be repeated for us indefinitely in Art, they must at least be *re-presented*. We demand the impress of an original mind—at any rate of original vision.

The next important change of direction was given by Manet and the Impressionists. Manet, in his turn, saw himself hemmed in by the walls of a *cul-de-sac*. He escaped from it by a deliberate return to the methods of Velasquez. He set his subjects full in the light, and accepted all the changes of modelling and chiaroscuro which this method involved.

The result was a greater simplification of design. But his followers carried the development of the method along different lines. Their interest lay more

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and more in exploring uncharted ways, recording new and elusive effects of light and shadow, untried juxtapositions of tone ; in running the shifting and the variable to earth. Thus close and faithful imitation became their paramount object. They carried skill in the representation of appearances, as they fell passively upon the retina, to a point beyond which it could go no further. And so another *cul-de-sac* was reached. The new exponents of the school fell into exaggeration and speedily became wearisome.

Reference has been made only to the greater movements in recent painting, stirring the depths. To enumerate those lesser eddies which have played upon its surface would be lengthy ; nor is it essential to our purpose. There have been groups innumerable, especially in France ; and great figures, upstanding, like Whistler, in isolation, unmoved themselves, but drawing to them irresistibly the usual crowd of conscious and

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unconscious imitators. What is significant is the flux and reflux and variety of the groupings and the eagerness of the imitators. They indicate, if nothing else, an underplay of restlessness and discontent ; a consciousness that all is not well ; that new aims are needed, new ways of seeing to be discovered. They indicate a growing impatience of the *cul-de-sac* ; the will either to surmount, break down or undermine its walls ; to let in light and air—the full blaze of sunlight and all the winds of Heaven : to make Art universal—comrade and solace of the toiler as well as the plaything of the rich. They are the outward signs of a yearning, still dumb and inarticulate, to quit the restricted field heretofore assigned to Art, and enter upon the whole vast heritage of the universe : to embrace and interpret all ‘the furniture of earth and choir of heaven,’ which for aught we know may, as Professor James suggests, ‘turn out to be a mere surface-veil of phenomena,

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hiding and keeping back the world of genuine realities.'

IV. THE POST-IMPRESSIONISTS

These overcharged conditions of the atmosphere lend even to transient phenomena in painting an importance sometimes beyond their intrinsic worth. Growths are thrown up that to sober eyes appear extravagant and strange. Yet if we condemn too promptly, we may haply miss the embryo of a statelier flora that is to be; some great step onward, of which these uncomely first-fruits are but the promise and earnest.

The most recent of these developments is that not long since introduced to England under the title of the 'Post-Impressionist' movement. So much controversy—and therefore, presumably, interest—was aroused by the exhibition of some of these works in the autumn of 1910, that it is worth while to devote a little space to their consideration.

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Post-Impressionism, as it has been christened, though strange to England, has long since passed its infancy abroad. In Paris, it may already be said to be 'vieux jeu.' Césanne, accounted by those most in touch with the movement its central figure, died in 1906, at the age of sixty-seven—Gauguin was twelve years younger at the time of his death in 1903 : and Van Gogh had already preceded them in 1890, at the age of thirty-seven. Visitors to the Salon des Indépendants for years past have been able to study the influence of these three painters upon a swarm of obscurer followers, most of them hardly to be taken as fairly representative of the school. But to England they came as a surprise. It is true that they were generally regarded as a huge practical joke, not in the best of taste : and that among such as realised that they were to be taken seriously they aroused a violence of feeling rather bewildering in a people that as a rule treats even the Art it prefers as a pastime. But the very

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violence of this feeling, the very heat and duration of the controversy, cannot but suggest that the phenomena which provoked them are worthy of investigation. Let us then examine the principles which, according to their own exponents and eulogists, underlay the movement.

It began—so the writer of the Preface to the Catalogue of this exhibition tells us—as a revolt against the Impressionist school founded by Manet. These, according to the same writer, had aimed chiefly at ‘recording hitherto unrecognised aspects of objects: they were interested in analysing the play of light and shadow into a multitude of distinct colours; they refined upon what was already illusive in Nature.’ ‘Impressionism encouraged an artist to paint a tree as it appeared to him at the moment under particular circumstances. It insisted so much upon the importance of his rendering his exact impression that his work often completely failed to ex-

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press a tree at all : as transferred to canvas it was just so much shimmer and colour. The "treeness" of the tree was not rendered at all ; all the emotion and associations such as trees may be made to convey in poetry were omitted.' This touches the fundamental note—emotion. It was here that the Post-Impressionists parted company with their predecessors, in order to make of this their paramount aim—the rendering of the 'emotional significance which lies in things, and is the most important subject-matter of art.' Your endeavour, they would say, if we may try to paraphrase them, is to represent appearances ; you demand, before all else, illusion. 'Close imitation of Nature, without any conscious modification by the Artist, has been proclaimed a dogma' among you. For us it is, on the contrary, heresy. The appearances of things must subserve the expression of emotion : Nature must, if necessary, be moulded, transformed, simplified. Let there be no more transcription of mere

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fact, no purely servile imitation : it is the significance, the real meaning, which it is our business to reveal.

The writer touches in turn upon the three leaders of the movement—Césanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin. The first, he says, ‘did not use consciously his new-found method of expression to convey ideas or emotions.’ His aim was a ‘design which should produce the coherent, architectural effect of the master-pieces of primitive Art,’—this being his heritage from Manet, whose method had led to a ‘simplification of planes in his pictures which resulted in something closely akin to simple linear designs.’ Van Gogh, we are told, using the methods of Césanne, ‘found a means of conveying the wildest and strangest visions conceived by any artist of our time.’ He is determined, at any cost, to secure for his portrayal of an object, ‘the quality which originally made it appeal so strangely to him.’ Still, ‘he accepts in the main the general appearance of nature.’

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Gauguin, on the other hand, set himself to employ the 'fundamental laws of abstract form and colour,' for influencing imagination. Decoration, therefore, was his aim. He thought it the directest way of bringing home to the spectator the force of the emotion which he himself had experienced and desired to convey. 'Rhythm,' in one word, so we are told, was the quality which he and his followers sought to achieve. Some of them, indeed, as the writer admits, carried its pursuit 'to lengths which often deprive the figure of all appearance of nature,' and are consequently disconcerting to a public used to and expectant of resemblance.

With all their strangeness—if you will, their extravagance,—there can be no doubt of the absolute sincerity and good faith of each of these three painters. The record of their lives and work is open for the sceptic to inspect. Césanne, recluse, thinker, indefatigable worker, living and dying in retirement, immersed

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in the problems of his Art. Van Gogh, in turn evangelist, social reformer, and finally artist, dying in madness by his own hand : madness following on a sun-stroke while he was painting in the fields. Gauguin, the wanderer, self-exiled to the Southern islands where so many of his pictures were painted. All three were sincere beyond dispute. They aimed at simplification, seizure of the essential ; at depicting a mental conception rather than a visual impression ; at revealing rather their own emotion than the qualities of the object. How far they were successful is a question that we are perhaps too near them to discuss profitably. As to the validity of the aims thus stated, there will inevitably be differences of opinion. The difficulty encountered by the artist who would use abstract design as his principle of expression is set forth by the writer from whom we have already quoted. 'In the earliest ages of art the artist's public were able to share in each successive triumph of

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his skill, for every advance he made was also an advance towards a more obvious representation of things as they appeared to everybody. Primitive art, like the art of children, consists not so much in an attempt to represent what the eye perceives, as to put a line round a mental conception of the object. Like the work of the primitive artist, the pictures children draw are often extraordinarily expressive. But what delights them is to find they are acquiring more and more skill in producing a deceptive likeness of the object itself. Give them a year of drawing lessons and they will probably produce results which will give the greatest satisfaction to them and their relations; but to the critical eye the original expressiveness will have vanished completely from their work. The development of primitive art (for here we are dealing with men and not children) is the gradual absorption of each newly observed detail into an already established system of design.

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Each new detail is hailed with delight by their public. But there comes a point when the accumulations of an increasing skill in mere representation begin to destroy the expressiveness of the design, and then, though a large section of the public continue to applaud, the artist grows uneasy. He begins to try to unload, to simplify the drawing and painting by which natural objects are evoked, in order to recover the lost expressiveness and life. He aims at *synthesis* in design; that is to say, he is prepared to subordinate consciously his power of representing the parts of his picture as plausibly as possible to the *expressiveness of his whole design*. But in this retrogressive movement he has the public, who have become accustomed to extremely plausible imitations of nature, against him at every step; and what is more, his own self-consciousness hampers him as well.'

The 'expressiveness of the whole design': what is it but that which so

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many of the great ones have seemed to secure by instinct, as did these also, for all we know, in so far as they have secured it? For the labels which the critic affixes must often surprise their bearers.

This would then resolve itself into little more than one of the principles underlying all Art—the subordination of detail to general effect ; though here the detail suppressed represents that which our eyes are most used to and demand, and the effect is one to which we have still to become accustomed. And many hold that excess of the former has here proved destructive of the latter.

Be the movement fleeting or permanent, destined to success or failure, it has aroused an unwonted amount of interest, and provoked controversy and discussion to a degree which cannot but be healthy in a people usually so little interested in artistic matters.

Of the critics, many, and not the least prominent, are favourable. It may some-

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times be that eyes directed ever to the search for beauty become so sated with its commoner forms that they turn to greet the bizarre, and even the repulsive, with relief, provided it has character. Still this something of a freer atmosphere felt both by critics and by artists would seem to indicate a living movement, of purpose, if not actually of achievement. Let us hear their language—‘We are now offered,’ says Mr. Lewis Hind, ‘the beginnings of an Art that gives to a thing the part that endures, the soul, whether it be good or ill.’ And again. ‘Suppose that through them this elusive insistent something that we call by the vague name of religion, rejoins art ; suppose that, through their fierce desire for true realities, the veils of sense and stupidity, for some of us, are torn away, the walls parted, and the essence of things, the quest for the unseen part which is eternal, be seen in everyday art in simplicity and beauty ?’

And Mr. Laurence Binyon—

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‘ Perhaps, at bottom [this movement] comes from a desire to recover something of the spirituality which modern Art has forgotten in its search for “sensations of well-being” and realistic imitation. We crave for an art which shall be more profound, more intense, more charged with essential spirit, more direct a communication between mind and mind.’

A desire to recover something of the spirituality which modern Art has forgotten :—what if this be a clue ? How if its unravelling lead us to the core of that dry rot which we saw to have crept upon so much of modern Art ? Here, it may be, we have the conclusion of the whole matter—in the very lack of that

‘ sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.’

There is little enough of this, in sooth, in most of the painting of to-day ; the want of it is the theme of many writers

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on Art. Mr. Berenson, for instance, speaking of an early Siennese painter, Sassetta, propounds the question ; ‘Are the figure Arts incapable of conveying a sense of things spiritual ?’ And the art of the extreme Orient alone prevents his answering the question in the affirmative. But of Chinese painting he says that it is ‘spiritualised through and through.’ Citing a well-known series of twelfth-century paintings representing legends of Buddhist saints, he ascribes to them ‘a sense of things spiritual which we scarcely ever find expressed in our own Art.’ He even goes so far as to ask, ‘Why is Christian Art so unreligious, so unspiritual as compared with the Art of Buddhism ?’

There would be many who would here at once deny the fundamental assumption, and be ready to show cause for doing so. But we are not yet concerned with the discussion of so wide a question. If we admit—what few, presumably, would deny—the lack of spirituality in

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contemporary European painting—it will then be to the purpose to inquire more closely into that other painting for which so large a measure of what we lack is claimed.



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‘ All writers, all artists of any kind, in so far as they have had any philosophical or critical power, perhaps just in so far as they have been deliberate artists at all, have had some philosophy, some criticism of their Art.’

W. B. YEATS.

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WE must turn aside, then, and endeavour to investigate the questions: is Far-Eastern painting especially characterised by spirituality? and, if so, wherein does that spirituality lie? From many people whose eye has been trained exclusively in the schools of Western Art, even when it has achieved therein a very considerable degree of cultivation, the first question would be met by a prompt negative. Mere unfamiliarity in itself often suffices to dim our vision. It appears to be difficult for Europeans, coming into a first contact with Chinese Painting, to see any beauty in it at all. Even when they have been brought to recognise the unequalled combination of form and colour and design in the best Chinese porcelain, or the magni-

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ficent workmanship and supreme decorative value of a Coromandel-wood screen, they stop short before what is represented to them as the highest achievement of the brush. ‘Do you ask me to believe,’ they say, ‘that in that faded brown thing, where the colours must always have been dull, and where half the design is indicated by a few strokes and dashes, you see something comparable to our finest European Art? The drawing is not even correct; there is no attempt at perspective; and the landscape really bears only the very slightest resemblance to nature. Are you the victim of some strange hallucination, or are you merely testing our sense of humour?’ The writer remembers accompanying a very versatile and accomplished lady to see the old paintings at the Japanese Exhibition in London. Though her taste in every branch of European Art was finely cultivated, and she could have pronounced a competent judgment on the work of any old masters submitted to her, she was

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utterly unable to see even decorative beauty in some of the most notable exhibits of ancient Japanese painting, withdrawn for the first time from the seclusion of temples and private collections that the English public might be enabled to see this Art at its best. Nor was my friend alone in her opinion. It was evidently shared by the vast majority of visitors to the exhibition ; for the rooms were always empty, save for a few Japanese visitors ; and this although the exhibits were changed week by week, so that there was an unequalled chance, not again likely to be realised, of learning something of the best Art of almost the only country in the world which will not cede its artistic treasures to foreign gold.

Well, it is true, perhaps, that to the European eye these paintings offer little to compare with the masterpieces of our own great artists. Their very slightness and tenuity, when contrasted with the robustness of European methods of oil and fresco painting, is against them. It

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is hard for us to understand a restraint which carries elimination of the superfluous almost to the vanishing point; which largely dispenses with modelling and chiaroscuro; uses a perspective that is not ours and conventions to which we are unaccustomed. But be it remembered that no form of Art is capable of appreciation without some preliminary training. We must know its place in aesthetic evolution, the influences which led up to and away from it, the conventions which it inherited, the subjects which pleased its particular epoch, the mentality of the age in which it flourished. Those who can cast their mind back to their earliest artistic impressions will find in most cases that though they may have understood Raphael and Rubens and Sir Joshua, Velasquez came to them at first with a shock, Botticelli was an enigma, and Simone Memmi merely grotesque. Tintoretto from his very vastness was probably unintelligible. It was only

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after much comparison and reflection, much deference to competent opinion and effort to see with other eyes, that suddenly the mystery was resolved. The scales fell, and what these others had meant became of itself apparent, and no longer a parrot-cry to be repeated after such as were vaguely felt to be right in their admirations.

A fortiori, then, is some preliminary training needful before we can hope to approach with adequate comprehension an Art based upon other conventions, inspired by other ideals and using other media of interpretation ; an Art that was old before Greece was heard of, yet which was still at its prime in the same fifteenth century that witnessed the hey-day of artistic achievement in Europe ; an Art, finally, which no contact with external influences has been able to deflect, for three thousand years and more, from the channel it had originally marked out for itself. It is no answer to object that the qualifications which I demand belong

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to literature rather than plastic art ; that a picture should be self-explanatory, independent of race, tradition or artistic descent, such extraneous matters merely serving to distract attention from its intrinsic value as a work of Art. For how many of the pictures esteemed greatest in our public galleries would be intelligible, on these terms, even to the most cultivated Chinese or Japanese visitor, or to any inquisitive stranger unacquainted with old Testament History, with Greek and Roman mythology, or various salient episodes from the story of the Christian faith? Even the most competent of critics probably knows something of the vague, unsatisfied feeling which possesses us when we are eluded by the subject of a picture whose colour, drawing and composition we may admire. And probably an impartial visitant from another planet would be more puzzled by many a classical European painting than by the simpler and oft-reiterated themes of the Far-East.

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CHINA I.

Let us try then, looking for guidance to some of those who have made the subject their special study, to investigate the influences under which the painting of the East arose and thrived.

Most great races in their infancy appear to have clothed such beliefs or superstitions as they possessed in anthropomorphic form. The Chinese were an exception. Paradox though it be—since we are examining the claim of their Art to spirituality—the very conception of ‘God’ in our Western sense was unknown to them, though according to M. Petrucci, (*La Philosophie de la Nature dans l’Art de l’extrême Orient*), a writer to whom repeated reference will be made, their sense of the Divine was thereby in no way diminished. ‘At the base of their whole civilisation,’ he says, ‘we find a conception of the relativity of things bearing no less upon their “social fabric,” their psychological structure,

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their philosophic and religious ideas, than upon their Art. . . . The world appeared to them not as an incomplete element, subjected by an absolute creator to their proud domination, but as a pulsating whole whose life, with its subtleties, its beauties and its sorrows, flowed ever on in a giant activity. Beyond this life they were able to catch a glimpse of the presence of that huge Principle of being which dominates immensity, barely suspected by our consciousness, indefinable by thought. The sentiment of former times deified it : our first attempt reduced it to the stature of our Gods. For the East, on the contrary, it represents a law directing the march of events.'

That the Chinese did not, like most other peoples, invest natural phenomena with Divine personality, is really the key-note of their whole religious—or rather philosophic—development. It is the ground-work thread on which the whole tapestry of their beliefs was woven.

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Sundry and divers systems of thought—first that of Lao-tze, then of Confucius, and finally of Buddha—were to be embroidered upon it, without obliterating, or even more than partially obscuring, the fundamental pattern. The Heaven was the primordial substance whence everything else proceeded. Earth and things earthly represented the female principle, which in contact with the male principle springing from the Heaven, gave rise to every form of life—and indeed of matter—in the universe. Such was the primitive Chinese Cosmogony. In it man was merely one among many forms of life. Not as with us in Europe the centre of the universe, ordained by the Almighty to have dominion over all created things ; but occupying a place in the scale where animals and plants, mountains, rivers and stones, had each its equal allotted station.

Natural phenomena were made to give the clue to the moral law as well. The regular recurrence of day and night and

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of the seasons, the movements of heavenly bodies, furnished a conception of order from which ethical rule was evolved. Hence the close study and intercourse with nature which led so many generations of sages to retire into wildernesses and solitary places where they might lie in wait, unhindered, for any manifestation of the great universal soul behind the outward show of being.

The mysterious and incomprehensible movements of this great universal principle which he named the Tao, were set forth by Lao-tze to his disciples. M. de Chavannes's explanation of it is quoted by Petrucci. 'One unique principle reigns above the world and realises itself in the world, immanent in, yet transcending it; it is at once that which has neither form nor sound nor colour, that which exists before all else, that which is unnameable: yet again, it is that which appears in ephemeral beings to set them in classes according to type and imprint on them as it were a reflection of the

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supreme reason. Here and there in nature we perceive the bright points of light by which it reveals itself to the sage, and we conceive a vague idea of its majestic reality. But when we reach this plane, our spirit adores in silence, well conscious that the words of human speech are incapable of expressing this entity, which contains in itself the universe and more besides. But to find some symbol for it we will assign to it a name which will indicate, first, its unfathomable essence,—at any rate the manner in which it becomes manifest: we will call it “the Way,” the Tao. “The Way” is a word implying first the idea of a power at work, of an action. The final principle is not an immovable term whose lifeless perfections would at the most satisfy the demands of pure reason: it is the life of incessant *becoming*, at once relative, since it changes, and absolute, since it is eternal. The Way further implies the idea of a sure direction, an advance whose every stage

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succeeds in definite order. Universal becoming is not a vain agitation : it is the realization of a law of harmony.'

Might we not almost be listening to some disciple of Hegel expounding his master's creed ?

We shall see how, centuries later, when the plastic Art of China had reached its highest development under the Sung dynasty, this conception of the Tao formed the basis of the classic rules laid down for the guidance of painters, and thenceforward observed with a reverence akin to the religious. Lao-tze's teaching was grafted upon the conceptions of the primitive Chinese Cosmogony. Its main theory of the relations of Heaven and Earth and Man, in their subordination to the dimly felt, all-controlling universal Principle, which had underlain, and was destined to continue to underlie all Chinese thought, remained the basis of his doctrine. Inspired by it the famous sect of the Siau-chou, three or four centuries before the Christian era,

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founded their philosophic and religious system, thereafter known as Tao-ism. They were people who believed in the attainment of magic powers conferring perennial youth. The rules for initiation into the sect were rigorous. Abstaining from cooked foods, with fruit and dew for nourishment, its members must renounce the world and its ambitions, and retire to the mountains to seek close communion with Nature. Popular imagination was not slow to weave about them a tissue of legends ; and their fame grew until their doctrines became a creed, destined to influence generations innumerable of poets, philosophers, painters, and statesmen, weary of the world and its prizes, and drawn to seek solace and contentment amid the inexhaustible works of Nature.

The phenomena of finite existence were but appearances masking the movement of the infinite, universal principle. The way of individual development lay from the restricted, partial, and incom-

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plete, towards incorporation with this infinite of which the existence beyond the welter of changing facts was dimly felt. Thus things earthly Lao-tze came to regard as merely a curtailment of the Divine, and, as such, fleeting and of little worth ; and hence his small esteem of human action, which, within the limits possible to it, could never for him be more than a futile striving for the compassing of unworthy ends. To re-enter into fellowship with the universal, man must renounce ; must abandon action, will, self-seeking ; and, withdrawn from the world and its striving, must endeavour to gain a glimpse, behind the phenomena of concrete things, of that inner soul of harmony which is the only true reality.

Thus from the earliest times it became a tradition with Chinese thought to look on nature as a symbol, the veil behind which the unfathomable immensity of things lay hidden, and of which occasional glimpses were vouchsafed to the

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sages in contemplation. We shall see later the extent to which this conception entered into all æsthetic interpretation in the East.

Lao-tze was a mystic, a recluse, occupied principally with the metaphysical aspect of things. Confucius was an exponent of practical ethics, concerned with the improvement of mankind, and the bettering of human relations. Harmony and equilibrium are the keynotes of his system. But though he discountenanced the vague and abstract speculations of Lao-tze, he maintained the old Chinese cosmogony with its conception of an all-controlling Heaven, and its scale of earthly values ; and his surviving writings are so full of precepts drawn from natural phenomena, as amply to demonstrate that the people to whom they were addressed were best appealed to by means of images drawn from nature. He anticipated Buddhism by preaching the doctrine of pity towards all forms of life ; not, like Buddhism,

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from a belief in metempsychosis, but on purely moral grounds.

Nature, then, from the first, meant to the Chinese philosopher a vast symbolism behind which the working of a universal spirit could be dimly perceived. Natural phenomena were but the appearances concealing reality: the soul of things must be sought beneath. So vast a philosophical conception, permeating all Chinese thought, could hardly fail to leave its impress on the national Art. 'This feeling for Nature,' writes M. Petrucci, 'gives to the intellectual history of the Far East a special aspect. It finds expression in the books of the early periods, in which tradition traces the words of the first wise men. It is to be found, already defined, self-conscious, the source of noble images and thoughts, in the works of the first philosophers. Laoism and Confucianism tell of it; and its evolution pursues its vigorous course up to the moment when it attains its apogee in the Art of the Sung period.'

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About the time that Confucius was uttering his wise precepts for the social well-being of mankind, a neighbouring region of Asia was witnessing the rise of another great teacher. But nearly a thousand years were to elapse before the faith he founded overstepped its borders and made the Far East convert. It is true that Buddhism became known in China about the first century of our era ; but it was not until over three hundred years later that, under the Sung dynasty, it took firm root in the soil.

During this interval of one thousand years since Confucius, his doctrines, like those of Lao-tze, had followed the usual course of schools of thought, philosophies, and religions. Interpreted and re-interpreted they had been stripped of their essentials and become bones of contention for pedants, until in the hands of Tchou Hi, early in the Sung period, Confucianism was codified and reduced to the system of extreme verbal subtlety but small spiritual import, which con-

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tinues to occupy the Chinese literati up to the present day.

But now Buddhism appears upon the scenes. Confucius had created a social organisation in which the relations of men to each other, to their Monarch and to the Heaven were duly regulated, and solemnised by the observance of formal rites. Sentiment, vague philosophic reverie, was discountenanced. Lao-tze had built up a system too intellectual for use among the common people, who had begun to weave about it a network of legend and superstition, upheld by an array of minor deities. Buddhism, with its doctrines of renunciation, pity, and love, was to appeal to sentiment, and supply the lacking element of faith, until the various scattered factors of belief became welded under its influences into a popular religion. Though Buddhism contributed its own multitude of gods, they merely took their place in the existing hierarchy among other natural things. They ranked above man, but

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merely as passing impersonations of the supreme and indefinable principle at the back of all things. Buddha himself was regarded merely as a man in whom all human faculties reached completion : 'who gathers in his heart the feeling of multitudes and universal pity : whose brain focusses the rays of pure intelligence : who possesses the magic and unknown powers that it has been the ambition of all solitaries to achieve : who embraces, in a single moment of time, the regions of men and gods. He is the wise man of all others, the pattern of ascetics, the perfect being who, having reached the extreme limit of his own destiny, becomes the universal master of men, of genii, and of gods.' But like other men he had to redeem his sins by 'penitence, sacrifice, and teaching of the way of Light.'

Buddhism brought with it new conceptions of faith, of religious sentiment and of pity : but it did not seek to impose an anthropomorphic reading of

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the old cosmogony. The time-honoured conception of an incalculable destiny, dominating the world, and registering the onflow of unceasing growth with relentless impartiality, remained standing.

The chief contribution of Buddhism was thus the love and pity of all created things. The temples were surrounded with gardens, which became sanctuaries for every form of living animal brought by the pious to preserve them from death; for even the humblest insect might contain some stricken soul struggling back on its interminable journey towards the light. Thus the love of nature, already existing, received enhancement, and acquired a fresh signification from this new appeal to the heart.

It has been necessary in this short review of the history of Chinese religious thought to lay thus much stress upon the all-pervading reverence for nature, because, as we shall have to

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show, not only the primitive but the mature art of China was throughout primarily a commentary and illustration of this philosophy of the universe.

Just as in the secular history of this people successive waves of invasion have overswept the country without in any way modifying the habits or character of the inhabitants, so we have seen that every fresh movement of thought, Taoism, Confucianism, or Buddhism, only amalgamated with existing fundamental notions, without bringing about in them any profound alteration. They were but superstructures erected on the bed-rock conception of an impersonal, inscrutable, universal principle, of which nature and gods and men and animals were merely varying and imperfect manifestations.

There has probably been no Art, and certainly no Western Art, which has kept so close to the philosophic or religious thought of its nation as the Chinese. Its function, in fact, may al-

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most be said to have been the interpretation and commentary of that thought. This might be brought against it as a reproach by the school of European criticism associated with the strict interpretation of the doctrine of Art for Art's sake. But let us beware of confusion of thought here. Art is not the less Art because its subject may be religious or even philosophic. Complete independence of subject has in fact always been one of the tenets of the school of which we are speaking. The criterion is purpose. If the artist wishes to preach, to tell a story, to make people better ; if, in short, any purpose other than that of pure artistic presentment is uppermost in his mind, then his Art, being secondary, must inevitably suffer. But if for the purpose of expressing his deepest emotions, he takes as his subject religious or philosophic conceptions, he deviates in no way from the legitimate path of Art—rather, indeed, the reverse ; since he does not shrink from the effort

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to give expression to what he holds highest and most sacred.

Western Art is often merely a reflection of the external aspect of things, masterfully and literally rendered: but that need not blind us to the fact that interpretation is also one of Art's legitimate functions. It is, indeed, often enough exercised among us with no restriction upon choice of subject but the painter's fancy. In the East his choice was invariably guided by the ambition to body forth and illustrate the ideas inherited from the great thinkers of his race, to strive to attain some glimpse of that underlying soul of things whose existence it had been the aim of a long series of sages to reveal. There was no moral or instructive purpose in his work. He was trying to convey through his Art the highest ideas known to him. Painting was his medium of expression as language is with the philosopher or teacher. He would never have sought his subject elsewhere than among the

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things which he regarded with the deepest reverence ; even as to Cimabue and Giotto and their contemporaries it would never have occurred to look for subject-matter outside the history of their faith. It was only later that European Art, becoming more scientific, became also secularised and lost its religious import. In China Art never lost that import. Yet no Art has ever been closer in its observation of Nature, or more diligent in its recurrence to her for models. Only its imitation of natural objects was never self-sufficing—never an aim in itself. Mountains and streams, trees and rocks, things living and lifeless, the meanest flower and insect, were always regarded as symbolical of a wider whole, mere external appearances veiling some manifestation of the unseen. But the artist as such was always paramount. Nowhere has closer thought, more painstaking study, been devoted to the purely technical side of Art, than among the Chinese. Nowhere have the quintes-

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sential artistic faculties of selection and elimination been more single-mindedly developed.

‘Inartistic’ is indeed the very last term of disparagement which even the least sympathetic critic of Chinese Art would be likely to employ. In nothing that they touched in Art did their unerring sense of form and colour and design seem to fail them. Their porcelain is an unending pleasure for colour-lovers, and in its line for lovers of form. Inharmonious combinations of colour are as completely lacking there as they are in the embroideries, in the vistas of the streets gay with carved and decorated shop-fronts, or in the attire of any chance Chinese crowd.

Those who cannot find internal evidence of this unfailing æsthetic sense in the works of art themselves, have only to turn to any standard authority on Chinese painting, such as Giles, Petrucci, or Laurence Binyon, to convince themselves that among no people has the

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love and cultivation of Art for its own sake exceeded or even equalled that which we find in China.

The close study of nature was preached by one and all the great masters. One of the best known in the thirteenth century is thus described by a biographer of his own race. 'Carrying paper and brush in his sleeve, he wandered far and wide. As soon as he came to some fine landscape or striking object, he took hasty sketches which he afterwards studied at leisure. The result was that the magic effects of dawn and evening on mountains, the four seasons with their harmonies of light and shade, all became accumulated in his mind and received definite form from his brush.'

Of a flower-painter of the eleventh century it was said that, while other artists produced a close resemblance of the flower they painted, 'his art not only produces the close resemblance, but gives at the same time the very soul of the flower. Each morning before the dew had vanished, he

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would walk in his garden, examine each flower with care, turn it in his hand to one side and the other, and then he would prepare his colours and paint it. He called himself "he who draws from life."'

Deeply-rooted though it was, the philosophic tendency was counteracted by the strong practical and positive side of the Chinese character. This led them always to nature for their models, and prevented their visions from evaporating in vague mystical dreams. Observation, technique, were no less important than philosophic insight. M. Petrucci relates an anecdote which well illustrates the manner which Lao-ism entered into and directed technical skill, as it did all else.

'Prince Houei's cook,' says Tchonangtsen, 'was cutting up an ox. Every blow of his hand, every movement of his shoulders and his feet, each contraction of his knees, each *whisk* of the severed flesh, each *chhk* of the knife, was in perfect harmony, rhythmical as the dance of the "Mulberry tree," simul-

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taneous as the chords of the King-cheou. "Good," cried the Prince, "your skill is really great." "Sire," replied the cook, "I have always given myself up to the Tao ; that is better than skill. When I first began to cut up oxen, I simply saw before me a whole ox. After three years of practice I saw only the cut-up joints. But now I work with my mind, not with my eyes. When my senses direct me to stop and my mind urges me forward, I fall back on the eternal principles. I follow the cavities and the open places just as they are, I do not seek to cut through the joints ; still less the large bones. A good cook changes his knife once a year, because he cuts—an ordinary cook once a month, because he hacks. But I have had this knife for ninety-nine years, and I have cut up with it several thousand oxen. Its edge is as keen as if it had just come from the stone. For in the joints there are always interstices, and the edge of a knife being without thickness, one needs only to in-

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troduce that which is without thickness into the interstices. Thus the interstices will be enlarged and the blade will find ample room. This is how I have preserved my knife for ninety-nine years as sharp as if it had just come from the stone. Still, when I come to a difficult part where the blade encounters some obstacle, I am all attention. I fix my eye upon it, I hold my hand, I lay on the blade gently until with a *bwah* the piece yields and falls like earth crumbling upon the ground. Then I lift my knife and hold it aloft: I look round and stop, until with an air of triumph I dry it and lay it carefully aside.” “Bravo,” cried the Prince, “Verily the speech of this cook hath taught me how to direct my life.”

Precisely similar was the aim which the Chinese painters set before themselves in the acquisition of their technique. Skill of hand and eye carried to the point where effort grows instinctive; mind set free to become one with its

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object ; and the individual escaped from self, merged in the universal, 'a mirror for reflecting immensity.'

What else is genius but a more than common endowment of the intuition which guides all groping fingers beyond the point where reason and the senses cease to help? It has names as many as the creeds and schools of thought—in the East the Tao, in Christendom the word of God : Emerson's Oversoul —'the stream whose source is hidden' : for the Hegelians 'Absolute mind in heterogeneity' : the 'subjective self' of modern psychic phrase, directing the work-a-day self of sense and reason. These and a score of others are but differing phrases to denote the power that transforms the poet's thought in his despite, and shapes the artist's hand to compass aims greater than he planned. Its realm is spirit : but it is akin to that vital impulse which Bergson shows us mysteriously working to fashion matter to its ends.

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Chinese Art goes back into the grey distance where historic records merge with the shadowy region of legend. There are bronzes of great beauty and elaboration of workmanship which are estimated to belong to a period at least one thousand years before Christ : there are remains of fine stone animal statues and bas-reliefs. But of more perishable forms of Art nothing is left, so far as European collections are concerned, earlier than the celebrated Scroll in the British Museum ascribed to Kou-k'ai-tche, and belonging to about the fourth century of our era. No work, however, which reveals such mastery of handling and subtlety of technique can have been produced except as the result of centuries of æsthetic evolution : and were other evidence of this required, the many references in early Chinese literature to the art of figure-painting which are recorded by Giles and others, would be sufficient to put the fact beyond question.

In the following century came the

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illustrious Sie-ho, author of the famous six canons which have governed all Chinese Art from his day to ours.

‘The manner in which they are formulated, the spirit which they reveal,’ says M. Petrucci, ‘throw a vivid light upon the history of an Art which had already brought into being in its works that which a master thus crystallised in his text.’ These canons, according to the same authority, are Lao-ist rather than Buddhist in character. The first of them he translates : ‘*La consonance de l’esprit engendre le mouvement (de la vie).*’ (The translation of Giles is ‘rhythmic vitality.’) ‘The consonance, or rhythm, of the spirit,’ he says, ‘is the creative element whence the movement of life springs. Its perennial flow is only a tangible manifestation of that rhythm which fills immensity. The harmonious movement of the spirit engenders the perpetual motion of things : they are the consequence of its action ; they would vanish into nothingness if it were to be

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arrested. The painter, then, must before all else perceive, amid the movement of external form, the rhythm of the spirit, the cosmic principle expressed by outer form : behind appearance he must seize the sense of Universal Being.'

The next four canons, dealing with anatomical structure, outline, colour, and composition, pursue the task of realising the Tao in the completion of the work. Perfect harmony being thus achieved, a living spirit would seem, according to the final canon, to enter into the picture and inform it : endowing it with the power of going forth to inspire works of similar perfection in other masters : ' Like the echo of a giant voice whose depth and splendour resound throughout the world's immensity.'

Were it not that the place of the six rules in Chinese painting were too well-known to admit of question, it would appear to the Western mind improbable, if not altogether inconceivable, that a great period of Art, extending over a

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thousand years, should have been dominated by a set of abstract metaphysical notions. We should expect rather to find in them the elucubrations of a painter with a turn for speculation, and a literary style happy enough to gain for his compositions a spurious authority: but the history of Chinese painting, through the attainment of its fullest powers under the Sung dynasty to its gradual decline under the Ming and its subsequent decadence, proves that this was not the case. The six rules continued throughout this long period, and still continue, to receive unquestioning acceptance as the basis of all artistic effort.

Comparison of the position occupied by painters in the East and West relatively will make this more easy of comprehension. In Europe, during the Renaissance period and later, artists were little more than artisans, employed by princes and nobles for the adornment of their buildings and galleries. In the East they were invariably scholars. Cal-

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igraphy and painting were very closely interlinked. The extraordinary complexity of the Chinese written character, and the fact that its instrument was the brush and not the pen, conferred enhanced consideration upon good handwriting, and made it likely that the good writer could more easily than another become a good painter. The good writer, owing to the innumerable signs and permutations of the Chinese alphabet, must also be erudite and accomplished. Erudition meant familiarity with the works of the great teachers, and with the immense superstructure of commentary and elucidation reared upon them. (The Chinese classics were edited in two hundred thousand volumes during the Tang dynasty.) And thus, since he who would become a painter must first be a good writer, and good writing meant scholarship, it came about that all painters were fully versed in the time-hallowed traditions of Chinese speculative thought. Many of them were also priests, philo-

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sophers, and even statesmen, weary of the cares of office, abandoning pomp and power to seek communion with that all-pervading soul of things of which a glimpse might now and then be vouchsafed to the wise. It is recorded that no less than ten of the most famous of Chinese painters withdrew from the world into the solitary places of the hills, and lived there the lives of anchorites that they might the better penetrate nature and her secrets.

M. Petrucci sets forth, in many eloquent passages, the difference of the motives respectively inspiring Eastern and Western Art. 'While,' he says, 'the early Masters of our Western Art clung to the exact character of form, and only attained to spirit by dint of vigorous exploration of reality, Eastern painters, governed by the force of their philosophic conception of the universe, never paused at this stage, with which they managed to deal in its purely technical elements. Even from the earliest

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works in which they revealed themselves, they sought for the spirit of universality that their philosophers had recognised in things. Starting from the purely symbolic and mysterious efforts which we find at the root of all human art in its primitive stages, they followed out a process of evolution whose connection with the humble work of prehistoric times was never broken. Only, as mind developed, and cultivation grew with civilisation, they came to evoke images capable of containing the wondrous dream of a nature half-revealed in its hidden structure and its giant laws. The man who, whether poet, writer, philosopher or statesman, withdrew into the solitudes to steep himself in the beauty of the world, could not fail, when he took up the brush, to comment on philosophic thought: or rather, to give to it that fresh vigour of expression which Art placed in his hands. When words fail, and reason is powerless to bind together the various elements of a half-seen system,

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the rhythm of verse or the magic of form come of themselves to the aid of the halting intelligence, and enable man, through the immensity of feeling and the power of things suggested, to say more, and move others more deeply than he could hope to do by pure reason and ponderous arguments.'

Again : ' For many of us the mountain is mere rock, the tree or plant without sensitiveness, the animal an organism that we look down upon. But for them the mountain wrapped in cloud was the certain form of the terrestrial Principle opposed to the humid Principle of vapour. The huge warfares and uncouth embraces that had fashioned the world were seen inscribed upon the reality of appearances. The plant was something other than an insensible organism ; it beat with hidden life ; concealed within it was a particle of the universal Soul, disguised in vegetable form ; and the humblest insect raised the grave problem of existences imprisoned in a fatal cycle, passing to-

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wards the destiny reserved for them in the vast tumult of a world into which Buddhism had brought the sad smile of pity, the sovereign life of redemption.'

The Chinese writers themselves are full of similar passages, of which Professor Giles and M. Petrucci give many instances. A painter speaks thus of the great Li Long-men, his contemporary :

'When he is on the mountains he need not concentrate upon individual objects, but his soul enters into communion with all things, and his spirit penetrates the mysteries of all Nature's wiles.' And again Kouo-Hi—a master of the eleventh century—'The artist must put himself into communion with his mountains and rivers, and the secret of the picture will be revealed.' Elsewhere another painter speaks of mountains having breath and pulse-beats.

This is language which might appeal to Fechner, with his vision of an indwelling consciousness in all created things, organic and inorganic ; but

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would sound strangely from most Western lips unless it were treated as mere rhetoric. In China it would have been taken in its literal sense.

‘A painter must wait until his mind be tranquil and his ideas have taken form, before he sets to work,’ writes Jao Tsen-Jan in his *Art of Painting*. And another thirteenth-century painter answers those who say that landscape is an easy thing—‘I think it is really difficult. For every time that one wishes to produce a landscape, one must carry its elements about within one and work at them in one’s mind for several days before the brush gets to work. So for composition ; there is a period of desperate reflection on the theme to be treated, and until a solution is reached one is in bondage of chain and iron. But as soon as inspiration comes, liberty returns and we are emancipated.’

Kouo Hi, from whom we have already quoted, gives the following precepts for the guidance of landscape painters :

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1. Cultivate a complete and universal habit of thought.
2. Observe widely and comprehensively
3. Acquire a varied and extended experience.
4. Extract the essential from a landscape and exclude the trivialities.

Enough has been said, perhaps, to show how far the Chinese reverence for Nature transcended the mere love of beautiful natural forms, and how closely knit up with it were the semi-philosophic, semi-religious conceptions which had from the earliest ages dominated the thought of the farthest East.

II.

No mention has hitherto been made of Japan : but what has been said of Chinese painting holds good, in its broad outlines, of that country also. Japan, then entering the field of civilisation, was flooded towards the beginning of our era with a wave of religious thought which made rapid headway.

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Buddhism, coloured with an admixture of Laoistic and Confucian doctrine, became the orthodox creed of the country, though it did not entirely displace the older Shinto faith. But Shintoism, like the early Cosmogony of China, had conferred a Divine character on all natural objects; and thus the new teaching combined easily with its existing creed. Buddhism brought fresh artistic as well as religious conceptions; and the new art, learnt from Chinese sources, pursued its development closely on Chinese lines. By the ninth century landscape-painting, clothed in Buddhist adaptations of the old Chinese philosophy of nature, was well established. On this followed, four or five centuries later, the influence of the Zen sect, bringing from China fresh Laoistic influences, and again profoundly affecting all Japanese thought. Solitary meditation, search for the universal in outward appearances, belief in the working of an Eternal Principle, reverent

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observation of nature ; these things now dominated the Art of Japan as they had long dominated that of China. It is from this period that the Japanese Art of flowers, and that of landscape-gardening, take their origin. A garden must symbolise the world. It must contain water, representing the feminine principle, the Yin, opposed to the male principle of earth ; and stagnant rather than flowing water, to typify repose, inertia. Rocks, carefully selected and of infinitely varied shapes, must be arranged according to elaborate rules : trees trained by slow centuries of growth to artificial development. Each flower and shrub had its inner significance. The lotus, spreading its pure petals on the surface of a stagnant swamp, stood for Buddha rising out of the ocean of existence. The cherry symbolised spring and the maple autumn. The pine-tree, with its evergreen foliage, was the emblem of will and stubborn vitality : the bamboo of wisdom. 'The

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painting of the bamboo,' says M. Petrucci, 'was a sort of subtle specialism ; the painter who devoted himself to it might exhaust all the aspects of the world and of the soul in the delicate and complex studies suggested by his Art.' A whole literature sprang up about this one province of painting. The plum-tree, with its white petals shining starlike among the tough vigour of its branch-work, was the sign of gentleness and virtue. Upon it, too, a complete philosophy was evolved, making this single tree with its structure of pistils, stamens, leaves and branches, symbolise the universe. So an unending range of images was evoked wherever the eye might turn. 'Sometimes they suggested moral lessons, or abstract ideas, such as Chastity, Faith and Piety : sometimes they called up visions of the distant land where the Buddha lived, a land of bamboo symbolising wisdom . . . The Laoist garden called to mind the mountain of fable, the unknown

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isle, the isle of the blessed where the sages dwell. In the Buddhist garden we find the five hills corresponding to the ideas of the old cosmogony, forgotten when the canon was laid down; or the lake signifying repose, in opposition to earth; and the great bridge with its single and nearly round arch which is the silver bridge of pure Faith, and which, in mystic belief, leads to the Paradise of Amida.'

So beneath the Art of flower arrangement, which sprang from the priestly rite of adorning Buddhist altars with blossoms signifying the admission of the plant world to the master's blessing, lay the same dominant notion of an all-pervading universal spirit.

What has here been said will suffice to make clear the close connection of the classic Art of Japan with that of China, and its participation in a common heritage of spiritual ideas. How deeply these had become rooted in the mind of the educated Japanese world is shown by

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the cleavage which exists between that Art and the school of colour-printers which arose in Japan during the eighteenth century. This school of the Ukiyo-ye—‘this-miserable-world pictures,’ in Lafcadio Hearn’s translation,—was a new departure, and a revolt. It was a popular movement, springing from the people; a reaction against the classic tradition which was rapidly following the lead of China into barren Academicism. Thanks to the efforts of the Goncourts and other writers, the names of Hokusai, Utamaro, Hiroshige, and others are becoming familiar to us; their work is, in fact, the only form of Japanese plastic Art with which Europe can be said to be acquainted. This is not only because of the inaccessibility of the older painting, but because these colour prints represent a conception of Art nearer to our own than that of the classical school. They were akin to our pictures of *genre*—representations of every-day things and people drawn

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from the life of the streets or set in familiar scenery. There was no profound philosophy, no symbolism and hidden meaning behind them: they were just what they seemed—pictures of popular life. For setting they had the crowded highways or the streets of Tokio, or the great cone of Fuji-no-yama, known to every child. At their best they showed all the Japanese feeling for colour, subtlety of line and delicacy of technique; they had humour, poetry, invention. But they broke with tradition, they infringed the canons, they had severed themselves from philosophic thought; and consequently, popular though they became among the people, they were, and continue to be, looked down upon by the educated adherents of the older classic Art. An illustration of this may be found in one of the essays of Lafcadio Hearn—that entitled ‘About Forces in Japanese Art.’ He is writing of an address on the Ukiyo-ye school delivered before the Japan Society in

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London, and expresses surprise that the Japanese Minister in the course of the discussion made a slighting reference to these colour-prints: they were only, he said, 'regarded as common things in Japan.' Yet to various fine critics of European Art some of these works have seemed veritable masterpieces. Their colour has been accounted as faultless as their sense of line and power of drawing. Hokusai's studies, of which there are volumes, have been compared with Dürer's. But with all their skill and power and charm they have failed to satisfy the lovers of the older school, to whom mere resemblance of external form, without inner significance, was not sufficient.

The opinion thus expressed by the Japanese Minister is the view held by all educated Japan. In Tokio the writer sought in vain to obtain from several cultivated Japanese gentlemen, whose information on the older painting had been unfailing, similar help with regard to the colour-prints. At the Japanese

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Exhibition of 1910 in London the rooms devoted to ancient Art did not include a single specimen of this school.

The bearing of these facts on our investigation is obvious. Our purpose was to inquire into the spirituality of Far-Eastern painting: and we see that a school which, according to Western standards, is possessed of high artistic merits, is discredited at home for its very lack of that quality. In other words, the Far East has demanded and received from its artists something beyond mere imitation, mere transcription of fact. It has demanded a spiritual significance—if that phrase may be defined as suggestion of the felt rather than representation of the seen world. ‘Suggestion’ is, in fact, the key which unlocks whatever in Eastern painting is baffling to Europeans: it is the clue which makes the whole cypher legible—suggestion of the unseen, of that which the senses are powerless to reveal or the brush to set down in definite image. Never for a moment

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were Chinese artists oblivious of that mysterious Principle of Being, the theme of so many teachers, inexorably working behind the appearances of things. Be their subject what it might, man or beast, mountain or tree or stream, flower or humblest insect, they never failed to convey some hint of its connection with that wider whole to which each and all must needs be subservient. In a portrait they would aim at eliminating the trivial, and at generalising, so far as possible : the wealth of detail with which Western portraits are so often encumbered was for them superfluous. Their emphasis lies rather on type than individuality. Landscape suggested the play of great immutable forces behind the veil of phenomena. In painting flowers it was, as we have seen, the soul of the flower which they sought to portray. So too with animals. The symbolism which they employed so freely invested the least of appearances with a significance transcending mere external form.

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‘Eastern Art’ says M. Petrucci, ‘guided by philosophic theory and by the belief of its wise men in a universal soul, and never setting man in the foreground as a predominant being, seeks in animals, in plants or minerals the forms in which to clothe the floating imagery of its thought. European Art, on the contrary, led by its general conception of the superiority of man, heir to the personifications of the classic age, goes primarily to the human form for the embodiment of its allegories, now and then falling back on the animal. This divergence of choice emphasises that tendency which guided Far-Eastern Art towards the broadest and serenest comprehension of nature that mankind has ever achieved. Certain of its chosen forms give ground for a philosophic interpretation whereon this feeling for nature is engraved; in contrast to the somewhat restricted and childish comparisons with which our system of symbolism has frequently contented it-

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self. Philosophy, Religion, the art of gardens and of flowers, were all built up in such a way that they provided a framework for allegories and traditions which found expression in plastic language. To understand Oriental æsthetics we must penetrate into the heart of these. They are the elements in Eastern Art which play the same part and carry the same allusions as with us the Greek and Biblical and Christian traditions that constitute the foundation of our Art.' Opportunity has conferred on few European art-lovers knowledge enough to endorse the full truth of these remarks. But it needs little more than a superficial acquaintance with Far-Eastern painting to find in it the constant presence of a quality so often lacking with us—the sense of things spiritual. It is the keynote of that whole great symphony to whose movements two thousand years and countless generations of painters and thinkers have contributed.

THE FUNCTION OF WESTERN PAINTING

‘A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful; poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.’—SHELLEY, *Defence of Poetry*.

IV. THE FUNCTION OF WESTERN PAINTING

THE questions suggested by Mr. Berenson, and the answers which our investigation has elicited in reply to them, place our own Art in a fresh light, as a colour appears to change its value by juxtaposition with others. That any race should have devoted many centuries of high artistic effort exclusively to the illustration of its spiritual ideas is a fact so alien to Western conceptions as to call for something more than casual remark. It arouses an uneasy feeling that we, who certainly cannot be said to have troubled ourselves with any such aim, may possibly have suffered somewhat from its entire omission. True, at the outset Western painting was lit up for a while by a

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certain sense of things spiritual ; but its fires soon dwindled to an uncertain flickering which finally died away before the searchlight of scientific realism. In the East painters delineated external form with the utmost skill and nicety that they might the better convey spiritual import : in the West the process of delineation grew in itself so fascinating that the import came to be lost sight of. An extension of the field of operations was the result. The question is, Did this outweigh the loss or diminution of import ? Does the advantage lie with East or West ? These are questions which it is difficult for any one whose training and bias have been exclusively Western to answer dispassionately : and they are not hastily to be answered. At first sight the range and variety and power of Western painting would seem to give it an overwhelming superiority ; but what if its very extent may have betrayed it into futility, into dissemination rather than concentration of effort ?

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Might not a solemn, unwavering purpose, such as inspired the Chinese, at least have saved us from the condition of aimlessness and uncertainty into which our Art by common consent has fallen ?

Such a purpose, we may at once admit, is completely alien to the ways of Western thought—alien alike to our needs, our knowledge, and our aspirations. It has been precluded by all the conditions of our development. Our evolution has proceeded along the lines of exact science, increasing precision of knowledge, an ever-growing rationalism ; the East has been content with mythology and superstition. Action has ever been our cry ; that of the East, Meditation. Our battle has been waged with matter ; the East has rather sought the subjugation of mind. We have been dominated by science, they by sentiment ; we have stifled imagination, they have fostered it. It was impossible that corresponding influences should not affect our Art. Very early it emanci-

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pated itself from exclusive service to religious ideas ; the allurements of freedom were irresistible. The first painters of the Renaissance began, like the Chinese, by employing external form for the embodiment of religious meaning. But the discovery of the joy that lay in the very imitation of form, and of the fact that all form without exception could be imitated, was too much for their successors. These left the worn track for the field of untrammelled exploration. Gradually they spread their researches throughout the realm of natural objects, seeking out every byway and hedgerow, peering into every chink and cranny, passionately and indiscriminately copying whatever met their eyes. On this illimitable expansion of subject-matter followed a corresponding evolution of technique. New methods of modelling, of perspective, of chiaroscuro, accompanied new methods of mixing and applying pigment : new effects of light were sought and mastered,

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new aspects of nature waylaid and reproduced. Here too science gave the keynote ; for the representation of external form at which Western painters aimed was so accurate and close as to be scientific. Illusion, in short, became their object.

We must not stay here to speculate whether our Art, without sacrifice of technique, might not have evolved for itself a form compatible with scientific world-theories, yet retaining spiritual import. Such may yet perhaps be the course of our artistic evolution. The scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions of the past century have submerged so many landmarks that our sense of direction and perspective is obscured. We have to build anew, yet the very abundance of material has paralysed our constructive faculty. As our immediate goal is comfort rather than mental growth, and our ideas are largely utilitarian, so too our age is one of small artistic production.

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The era of reconstruction will come ; there are indications that it is almost upon us. The tide has turned and is ebbing, and a conviction of our primary need for a background to life transcending the purely material is becoming general. In the freer mental and spiritual atmosphere which it will be the aim of future lawgivers to place within the reach of all alike, Art will doubtless take a foremost place. But if it is to cease to be regarded as belonging to the sphere of the frivolous, as a luxury only accessible to the rich, it must be felt to have a profound significance, a universal import.

It thus becomes pertinent to inquire whether, despite the wide difference of conditions, there is not a lesson to be learned from Eastern painting where spiritual import was of such paramount importance? We can hardly hope to find an adequate answer without some review of the general functions of our own painting ; and it is the more

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necessary since this belongs to the wide category of fundamental questions which appear so obvious that we hardly even trouble to formulate, much less to answer them.

I. AIMS ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL

Art has been defined as the expression of emotion in a form that communicates it. The emotion of Eastern painters, as we have seen, originated rather in the philosophical and religious ideas suggested by phenomena than in phenomena themselves. In the West, on the other hand, painters have oftener been content to hold the mirror up to Nature for no other purpose than to catch the literal reflection of her forms. Here then we have two main tendencies defined :—

Painting, working always through the representation of external form, may represent objects for their own sake, or for the sake of the ideas they can be made to convey. In the first case it is

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often no more than a literal transcription of fact : in the second, it may open a window through which imagination can take flight into the infinite.

A third main channel, namely decoration, when painting is subordinate to some general architectural scheme, and the expression of emotion becomes secondary, may be left for the moment out of account.

To demand from every painter the clear-cut choice between making his work represent objects for their own sake, or for the sake of the ideas conveyable in them, would perhaps be to foredoom the majority to self-conscious impotence. Still, conscious purpose is the first condition of great Art ; and in its absence there is chaos. This is the more to be insisted on in that the effects of Art are so commonly confounded with its purposes. Great Art may indeed have the *effect* of criticising life, or developing understanding, or awakening sympathy ; its interest may be narrative,

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instructive, or moral. But none of these should be its purpose. They are incidental, not essential : and though, for the crowd, they are the aspect which is most easily seized, to the painter they should be secondary.

There is no need to dwell much on the *effects* of painting, which are conditioned by the mentality of the public, the tastes and tendencies of various epochs, and the character of individual painters. The business of all Art is selection—the elimination of the superfluous and the laying bare of the essential—and a picture stimulates the power of observation, and helps the spectator to see aspects of things before unnoticed by him. It is in this sense that painting may be said to ‘criticise’ life : for it facilitates the sifting process with which intelligence is unendingly busied. Similarly it may develop understanding, and awaken sympathy ; for by bringing unfamiliar objects within the focus of observation it arouses an interest in them

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hitherto unfelt. So we saw how the Barbizon painters, the modern Dutch school, and Segantini in Switzerland, have revealed to many eyes the poetry and the prose of peasant life, framed, with its hardships, its pathos and its monotony, in Nature's all-embracing setting.

For the crowd, we have seen, the interest of painting may be narrative, or instructive, or moral, as it was in the case of Hogarth. But this, if it had been the painter's aim, is to borrow from literature or ethics, and to substitute other motives for the purely æsthetic. Ruskin, as we know, and later Tolstoi, held that Art which failed to serve a moral purpose stood condemned; but to modern ways of thinking they were mistaken. Art may be incidentally, but not intentionally, of moral value.

It is necessary to bear this distinction between purpose and effects in mind in approaching the three-fold equation of the painter, his work, and the public.

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The action and reaction of forces may be as incalculable in Art as in physics. The results can hardly be disentangled unless the first and last terms of the equation be considered separately. Let us take the painter first, and ask, What is his actual aim? The answer, if it reveal shortcomings, may perhaps also suggest possibilities, and lead to the further question—What more might he not hope to achieve?

II. THE PAINTER

An artist is impelled by the blind instinct of creation. Something in his environment appeals so strongly to his sense of beauty that the desire to represent it is irresistible. The result is his work—the perpetuation of a brief aspect of life which his particular facet reflects. Of so strange a character is his emotion that at all costs he must be delivered of it; first and foremost that his mind may be at peace: secondly—but a long way

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afterwards—that others may enjoy the pleasures he has enjoyed. Obviously here the personal factor plays a large part. Absolute sincerity of feeling is the first requisite ; for where sincerity is wanting there is no Art ; and sincerity can redeem even defective technique. But the content and quality of mind vary with the individual ; and these go towards the making up of ‘expression.’ If representation were accomplished by mechanical means, as a mirror reflects, or a photograph records, there would be no room for expression ; for expression is that which the artist’s personality super-adds to bare reproduction. It is something over and above the image of the object—something compact of associations extraneous to that object ; capable of setting chords vibrating or starting ripples that will travel to the ocean’s rim.

Let us consider first the case of a painter whose delight in sheer beauty of form and colour fill him with the

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irresistible desire to reproduce it, for its own sake, and with no other purpose or aim in view. If his skill be great enough, his rendering may reach that of Velasquez, or Rubens, or another of the great realists : but he is not likely to outdistance them. For each of these marked out a path for himself and pursued it to its utmost limit : and countless followers have disconsolately had to turn back from the *cul-de-sac* to which their master's leading brought them. There is a point, in fact, beyond which sheer mastery of technique cannot go. As a result the followers of these great ones have either failed ignominiously in the attempt to outdo their masters, or they have sought to achieve originality by other methods. Not infrequently they have taken as their purpose what we have termed the effects of Art ; they have set themselves to instruct, to preach, to narrate ; to widen sympathy and deepen understanding. And often by so doing they have

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achieved a short-lived popularity ; but at a heavy cost both to their Art and to public taste.

Others, by daring novelties of technique or composition, have sought to take public approbation by assault ; and sometimes successfully. Their ingenuity has exhausted every device of modelling, lighting, perspective, chiaroscuro and colour, to kindle a listless public to attention ; but always with the same inevitable result. Sooner or later every possible combination and permutation of the ways of representing form is exhausted ; and then the public, satiated and weary, turns aside to await the arrival of a true master, or in his default, of a new sensation. The point to be brought out is that when Art is confined to imitation of outward form for its own sake only, the moment inevitably arrives when the highest peak is reached. So long as that sole object is in view, no further advance is possible, and though new routes are tried, they all lead up

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sooner or later to the same high plateau beyond which ascent is barred.

Genius, of course, never stops short at the 'transcription of mere fact.' Even when their rendering seemed most literal such giants as Velasquez, Hals, or Rubens contrived to shed upon their work the atmosphere of the whole sunlit universe. Sheer technical mastery may kindle imagination better than a direct and calculated appeal. But giants are few. Their imitators are wont, in falling short of mastery, to leave imagination cold. A trivial subject unlit by genius wearies by its own emptiness. The conclusion which would seem to impose itself is that whatever the great outstanding figures in Art may do, smaller men, if their purpose be not something more than mere copying of external form, will only succeed in producing work destined, like the seed sown on a rock, to wither away.

But here expression may play a saving part. Though on the one hand, the

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painter may fail to impart the sense of things spiritual, and lack the power, on the other, of so representing familiar natural objects as to coerce admiration, there remain to him resources yet unproved. The aspects of nature are inexhaustible, and only an infinitesimal proportion of them have ever been observed, much less recorded. Let him but bring to the presentation of some new view of her the stamp of a sincere personality and the expression of a genuine emotion, and he will not want recognition: if the emotion be violent enough it may even outweigh faults of technique and lend interest to a trite subject. Again, personality may realise itself in the choice of subject; and here there is no limit. Some seek it where its associations themselves shed the glamour of romance or poetry. Such was the treatment of mediæval legend by the Pre-Raphaelites. Others, like Watts and Gustave Moreau, speak in allegory. Many have tried to breathe fresh life

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into classic myths, or, like Abbey or Bastien-Lepage, to re-animate historic scenes. Others 'idealise': that is to say, sift out the poetry of life and let the prose alone. Mason and Walker will occur as instances. On each and every path expression, that is to say, the painter's power of making others feel his own emotion, is the condition of success.

Thus to the making of a true picture there go, not merely the powers of accurate representation, of correct drawing and skilful technique, but also the element of personality, infinitely various and incalculable. Personality, in fact, is the beacon-fire lighting up a way amid the chaos of conflicting aims and influences. With our Art as unsettled as our faith, we are driven back, distrustful both of our purpose and our guides, upon ourselves, and must find within the directing principles we have in vain sought without. And here one unassailable fact confronts us: that no two person-

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alities are identical. We each have our own point of view as distinctly personal as the impress of our thumbs. Let the artist develop in himself that point of view to the utmost, and (provided he be equipped with the necessary modicum of technical training) he will probably be able to give to the world something that it will value. Flaubert's advice to Maupassant is almost too well-known to quote again : yet it is too apposite to be omitted. 'Si on a une originalité,' said the old master to Maupassant in the Sunday talks over the luncheon-table at which he criticised the younger writer's productions, 'il faut avant tout la dégager ; si on n'en a pas, il faut en acquérir une.'

'Le talent est une longue patience. Il s'agit de regarder tout ce qu'on veut exprimer assez longtemps et avec assez d'attention pour en découvrir un aspect qui n'ait été vu et dit par personne. Il y a dans tout, de l'inexploré, parce que nous sommes habitués à ne nous servir de nos yeux qu'avec le souvenir de ce

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qu'on a pensé avant nous sur ce que nous contemplons. La moindre chose contient un peu d'inconnu. Trouvons-le. Pour décrire un feu qui flambe et un arbre dans une plaine, demeurons en face de ce feu et de cet arbre jusqu'à ce qu'ils ne ressemblent plus, pour nous, à aucun autre arbre et à aucun autre feu.

‘C'est de cette façon qu'on devient original. Ayant, en outre, posé cette vérité, qu'il n'y a pas, de par le monde entier, deux grains de sable, deux mouches, deux mains ou deux nez absolument pareils, il me forçait à exprimer, en quelques phrases, un être ou un objet de manière à le particulariser nettement, à le distinguer de tous les autres êtres ou de tous les autres objets de même race ou de même espèce.

‘Quand vous passez, me disait-il, devant un épicier assis sur sa porte, devant un concierge qui fume sa pipe, devant une station de fiacres, montrez-moi cet épicier et ce concierge, leur pose, toute leur apparence physique contenant aussi,

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indiquée par l'adresse de l'image, toute leur nature morale, de façon à ce que je ne les confonde avec aucun autre épicier ou avec aucun autre concierge, et faites-moi voir, par un seul mot, en quoi un cheval de fiacre ne ressemble pas aux cinquante autres qui le suivent et le précèdent.'

It is with painting as with literature. There is always an aspect of things visible to one man only : that aspect he must seize and reproduce, though it cost him years of effort. If he succeeds, however limited his range, his work will in so far be complete. It will bear the impress of an individual mind, and with this hall-mark upon it, may receive absolution for other faults, even those of execution. For it is *mind* that in the last analysis we demand in Art as in all else. It is mind, and mind only, that can give permanence to a work of Art. Where it is present, familiarity will be powerless to dim a picture's freshness or silence the response which it evokes in us.

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Where it is absent, though a picture may at first have given us the pleasure of recognition—the all too facile achievement of plausible and superficial truthfulness, we shall speedily plumb its shallows and explore its limits; and each fresh view will but increase our sense of weariness and deception. There is no gallery but contains such works by hundreds: who does not know them? Classical subjects drawn with academic faultlessness: landscapes composed with a scrupulous observance of rule, containing just the right proportions of mountain, plain, and river, relieved by the right number of foreground figures: machine-made portraits, faithfully reproducing the trivial details of trivial faces. In most of them, stagnant and lifeless, there can be discerned the backwash of some great school once full of vehemence and power. The ‘grand manner,’ extolled by Sir Joshua, extolled, probably, in every age by the rightful admirers of a greater past, is probably responsible for the majority

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of these compositions. Their authors have abdicated the powers of thought and direct observation and been content to paint according to rule, imitating their masters rather than nature. Such is the penalty that the world invariably pays for its great men—and not only in Art. It is a truism that in literature, in religion, in philosophy, as in statecraft, the genius of one age is translated into the barren formulæ of the next, so eager to preserve the letter that the spirit is left out of account.

Contrast with these the works of artists of whom we feel, however dimly, that they have a definite message to give. To a trained eye the spark of life in these flashes an instant signal. There are those who would choose the companionship of many a work of obscure or unrecorded origin, before that of a score of lifeless canvases signed with a famous name.

It is time to summarise our results. For Western painting there is no restric-

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tion either in choice of subject or method : it may draw upon the universe at large, and attempt to represent anything in Earth or Heaven. Thus it is in no way precluded from the attempt to emulate the East in conveying the sense of spiritual things. If it concerns itself principally with the representation of external form for its own sake, it does so in sympathy with the increasingly scientific tendencies of Western civilisation, which sets more store by truth and hard fact than by imagination. We saw, however, that only outstanding genius could hope, in the long-run, to render 'the transcription of mere fact' interesting ; seeing that genius alone need fear neither triviality nor triteness. In the hand of lesser men the endlessly reiterated reproduction of outward form without inner significance is apt to become wearisome and unsatisfying. Thus has arisen the need of relieving it by some uncommonness, either of subject or treatment. But apart from technical genius

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the sole quality capable of giving permanence to a work of Art we saw to be the informing power of mind, in self-revelation. A painter who can succeed in giving expression to a vision of things peculiar to himself, aiming, not at originality, but at sincere and complete realisation of the powers of sight and mind inherent in what we term his personality, may outlive many a rival by far his superior in natural gifts. But often enough he will be running counter to all the received opinions of his generation ; and comparatively few are of texture stiff enough to face a lifetime of abuse and misrepresentation and hunger. It is so much easier to paint what the Public wants than to educate it up to the level of higher wants ; and when we deplore great powers ending in futility for lack of the stern purpose to set truth to self above the prizes of a facile popularity, should not our mood be one of pity rather than censure ?

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III. THE PUBLIC

And here we are confronted with the other term of the equation—the Public. Not, for our purposes, the small circle whose eye is trained, as its taste is refined and subtilised by constant exercise ; whose memory is stored for comparison with the Art not of one era or continent, but of every race that has counted, and every epoch ; whose mind, while it rejoices in the old, does not reject the new. Not with this very limited circle : but with the wider Public, many and wrong-headed, naïve, uninformed, curious, sometimes even eager, which takes cognisance of Art to the extent of paying occasional visits to galleries, or buying occasional pictures. In Greece and Renaissance Italy, we may surmise that the gulf dividing the initiate from the rest was easier to cross. But in our day, between those who know and the remainder, there lies a long, impassable barrier-reef, unpierced save by a narrow

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opening here and there. Those who respond eagerly to artistic stimulus are in a measure active participants in creation, and may be left out of account ; but the larger Public is passive in its attitude and only reacts reluctantly. It is the relation of this wider Public to the painter that we have, accordingly, to investigate.

To begin with, in order that the painter may live, the Public must be pleased ; for however disinterested his devotion to his Art, he is subject to the law of supply and demand. He may be guided solely by the instinct of creation, and work with no eye to appreciation or recognition ; but without them he must starve. Even if he would, therefore, he cannot dissociate himself entirely from the stock of ideas and opinions common to his age, or anticipate too presciently those of the age to follow. We have spoken of the attitude of the Public towards Art as passive. It enters a gallery with a mind either listless and empty, or preoccupied with practical

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concerns. It has, as we have said, no conception either of æsthetic principles, or of the historic evolution and present relationships of the Art it is about to belaud or condemn. It is there from various motives : sometimes the sense of duty, sometimes a faint curiosity, sometimes the hope of a sensation. It wishes to see the familiar and the easily recognisable ; to be the recipient of impressions which it may sift by the simple test of likeness and unlikeness. Even more than the painter himself, it reflects the scientific and material tendencies—the externality—of the age. Its values are such as can be seen and touched and weighed. The prompt and easy appeal which the utilitarian test makes to the superficial, the half-educated and the over-driven, indisposes this large section of the community toward any form of activity whose results cannot be expressed in terms of practical advantage.

The criterion of likeness and unlikeness can be brought within the utilitarian

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standpoint. Further, it involves little or no effort on the part of the spectator : it spares him the trouble of thought, and enables him to maintain his attitude of passivity. He need not concern himself with the painter's intentions or aims, or look below the surface in quest of something more than cheap resemblance ; for that would be to exert his own brain and desert a passive for an active rôle. Essentially, he is the voter, with views about the government of the day, the European situation, the excess of taxation. Art cannot hope to appeal either to his intellect or his emotions ; that there so much as exist theories of æsthetics is unknown to him. Wandering through the crowded rooms of the Academy, I have often amused myself by speculating on the standpoint from which large numbers of the visitors view the pictures. Stray fragments of criticism and comment which one cannot but overhear facilitate the process of generalisation. There is obviously considerable

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eagerness, and a conscientiousness which it is impossible not to admire. The greater number seem to be in search of a sensation rather than an emotion. One might fancy the occupants of one room mentally fused, like the composite photographs to be found in illustrated magazines ; and then question this compound mentality on its attitude to Art in general. The result would be very unlikely to show any definite notions of a picture's purpose or possibilities. 'Why talk to us of such things?' we might fancy it exclaiming contemptuously. 'We want to renew a familiar sensation ; to find our Leader and our Alma Tadema in their accustomed places. We want to see the King as a Field-Marshal, and Bumble in his mayoral robes—to see whether the Prime Minister is like his caricature in *Punch*, and how the Society Beauties look about whom we read in the papers. We want to be able to feel critical ; to be pained, gratified, shocked and flattered in quick succession. Even

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an occasional lapse on the part of a favourite does not come amiss ; there is satisfaction in the shake of the head over the poor fellow's deterioration.'

The whole visit, in fact, is of the nature of a ceremony performed in accordance with time-honoured rites. There is no more exertion of the intellect than is involved in formal visits between country neighbours, where usage prescribes the automatic exchange of questions whose answers are already known.

IV. CO-OPERATION

What a contrast to the relation between the Eastern painter and his public ! There, as we have seen, allusiveness was of the essence of the matter, and never doubted of its appeal. Even the slightest treatment of a familiar theme sufficed to start trains of thought transcending earthly limits ; and the painter was speaking to an audience whose imagination stood ready

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to leap forth in response to the faintest call ; even as to a music-lover a single phrase, just hummed, evokes a symphony. The contrast may serve to give the clue to one of the great lacks of Western Art—its poverty of imagination.

All Art demands the co-operation of the spectator—a truism more deserving of attention than many of its fellows. The full appreciation of a complex work of Art calls for an effort from the on-looker corresponding to the expenditure of mental power on the part of the artist. How can we expect that that on which the experience, the observation, the dexterity and the thought of a life-time are concentrated, shall be worthily plumbed, judged, and catalogued in the space of the few moments of cursory investigation usually accorded to it? Only he who has felt and seen and studied can pretend to judge the product of another's study and feeling. Only he who has thought can measure the thought that the labour of execution has cost another :

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only the imaginative will detect and vibrate to the appeal of imagination. Yet we, forsooth, or a large number of us, enter a picture gallery with a confidence sometimes not untinged with condescension, ready to criticise, condemn, or praise by the light of our natural instincts and intelligence, unassisted by training, knowledge or imagination. Almost as profitably might one ignorant of volts and ohms and periodicities enter into discussion with an electrical expert, or he who knows no language but his own proceed to expound theories of etymology. So limited, we can but bring to bear in every case the sole criterion that we know—that of resemblance. If what we seek in a work of Art show an appreciable correspondence with the records of a cursory and often ill-trained observation, we are ready to vouchsafe to it our approval; if not, we reject it on the plea of unlikeness. To attempt to penetrate the painter's aim, to get below the surface, and see, in studio

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slang, 'what he was going for,' is, except in the simplest cases, beyond our scope.

Knowing his public, the painter, on his side, if he wishes to achieve popularity, makes little or no attempt to appeal to the imagination. He has got to confine himself to fact and positive statement, to aim rather at non-omission of detail than at selection of the essential, at the individual rather than the type, the particular and not the general. The public must be able to recognise, and the public does not look deep. He must cater, in short, for the commonplace vision. Such at any rate may be presumed to have been the process of reasoning which is responsible for much of the so-called popular Art of to-day. Whether or no the painter may have been mistaken is a question to which we will revert later. It suffices, at present, to recognise that what is demanded, and chiefly given, is servile imitation—crossed *t*'s and dotted *i*'s; and that any attempt to make the public take its

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place in the transaction by supplying from its own consciousness what the picture does no more than suggest, is commonly destined to failure.

The Germans have a word to express this act of co-operation in artistic presentment—mitschöpfen, to ‘share in the act of creation.’ And in truth the unloosing of imagination at the sight of a beautiful work of man’s hands may amount to creation. From one point of view, indeed, every action of our lives is creative. Science teaches us that in each act of perception we create, seeing that colour and form and sound are in us, and not in the object to which we transfer those attributes.

‘This beauty is in us, not in things : there can be no more beauty in sounds and colours than there can be pain in a pin or pleasure in a hot-water bottle : the beauty of the world is in us, every note of its music, every scrap of its colour.’

In so far, then, we create each one his own share of the universe : and he whose

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eye is most trained, whose fancy most alert, whose mind best equipped, has the share that is richest. It is a commonplace of the philosophers that on the regarding mind depends the full significance of things.

‘Suppose a man A.B. comes into my room,’ says Lord Haldane in *The Pathway to Reality*. ‘A person who had never seen him before might think him uninteresting or even repulsive to look at. Another person, who knew that the the disfigurement of his face was the result of an accident which he met with in saving his friend’s life, and that his short-sighted look was the result of constant study, might think his face expressive of all that is best. He takes up a book and reads a line of German. The one man recognises the words as forming one of Goethe’s lyrics. A person who did not know German would have one kind of impression, a person who did know it quite another. A.B.’s voice conveys to the one man a succession

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of unintelligible sounds. To the other man it suggests a vast wealth of images and reflections. He forgets the sounds—ceases to distinguish them, thinks only of the sense and the feelings which are awakened. “Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh.” From the standpoint of the mere student of acoustics, these sounds form an experience for the listener complete in its individuality. His purpose rests satisfied and seeks nothing beyond. He has brought it under his special conception, converted it by abstraction into universals, and is satisfied. But to the other man, who knows nothing, and cares little, about acoustics, the bare sounds cease at once to be bare sounds. They are merged in the thoughts which they awaken. The result is two totally divergent experiences arising from the fact that the two observers, in whom respectively these experiences have arisen, have different mental furnishings and different purposes. So far as each recognised a man, they had a common im-

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pression. But even this was only the outcome of common conception and standpoint. A wild animal might not have even recognised a man. A lizard might not have even recognised a living object. So deep down does the penetrating work of thought reach, and so much does the constitution of experience depend upon conception of purpose. It is the exclusiveness of the standpoint at which I am, and of my abstraction under its conceptions and for its purposes, that make the world seem hard-and-fast. In other words, the world as it seems is determined in its form rather by ends and purposes than by causes.

‘ Now, the German book which awoke such a mighty response in the mind of the man who appreciated the meaning and form of the thoughts expressed in it, would to the dog be only so much paper and ink : and the dog would know no better even after he had chewed it. The reality is thus very different in the case of the dog and in that of the person

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with an instructed and developed mind, although so far the basis may be a common one.'

And the greatest of living French thinkers has as the basis of his whole teaching the thesis that consciousness and creation are equivalent terms—and denote that which excepts all life from the compulsion of necessity and thereby differentiates it from the inorganic. 'Thus all the lines of facts we follow,' he says (Bergson, *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1911) 'seem to converge on the same point, a point at which we seem to see the following image arise: on the one hand, matter subject to necessity, a kind of immense machine, without memory, or at least having only just sufficient memory to bridge the interval between one instant and the next, each of the states of the material world being capable, or almost so, of mathematical deduction from the preceding state, and consequently adding nothing thereto: on the other hand, consciousness—that

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is to say, on the contrary, a force essentially free and essentially memory, a force whose very character is to pile up the past on the past, like a rolling snowball, and at every instant of duration to organise with this past something new which is real creation.'

But we need not dip very deeply into philosophy to see the application of these principles to our concrete case. No one can bring to the appreciation of a picture, or of any other work of art or literature, more than he has within himself. The trained eye, the well-stored brain, the fertile imagination, will obviously put into, or if you will, extract from, the work more than a commonplace vision and an untrained mind. For the one 'über allen Gipfeln' will be mere sound: for the other a glimpse between the gates of Paradise. The one will be filled with ecstasy over a Rembrandt etching or a Dürer woodcut which will be of less interest to the other than the cartoon of his weekly comic paper.



VISION

‘ Apprendre à voir est le plus long apprentissage de
tous les Arts.’—*Journal des Goncourt.*

V. VISION

WE have thus found that just as the Western painter is more preoccupied with the literal rendering of external appearances than with the inner significance of things, so the public looks chiefly for resemblance, is not amenable to imaginative appeal, and is rather the passive recipient of impressions than co-operator with the painter in creation. These results may help to lead us to the answer to our second question—namely, What might Art, and particularly the art of painting, do for us that it does not at present do?

At present the possibilities of pictorial representation are hedged in closely by the limitations imposed, partly by the painter himself, but chiefly by the public. Sooner or later as we have seen

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the inevitable *cul-de-sac* bars further advance. Fidelity of literal imitation cannot be carried beyond a certain point : and at that point the eye trained to look solely for illusion is arrested. Meanwhile the development of the imagination has suffered ; for where all is faithfully recorded there is nothing left for imagination to supply. And this very stunting of imagination conduces to the third result we have noted, viz., passive recipience rather than active co-operation on the part of the spectator. He quickly loses the alertness which constant appeal to the imagination alone can foster, and comes to expect that his æsthetic aliment shall be served him in the form calling for the least possible effort. But only effort, sustained and constantly renewed, can keep any part of the human machine tuned to its full efficiency. So the imaginative faculties grow atrophied, and the vicious circle widens ; the painter, for his livelihood, having to furnish what his patron

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wants ; and the latter growing ever less and less disposed to exert himself to the comprehension of anything beyond more or less servile copying.

The answer is thus clearly indicated. Only by making more appeal to the imagination, and thus directly contributing to its training, can we hope to surmount the barrier which the scientific evolution of modern painting has erected across the path. Only by exacting some measure of co-operation from the spectator, can we raise him to the full fruition of which close communion with the creating mind is the condition ; only by leading him to distrust too servile an imitation of external form can we suggest to him its inner significance.

There are here three points to be considered : the actual power of vision possessed ; the degree of imagination capable of being excited ; and the extent to which things unseen can be suggested by outer form. Let us examine each one a little more closely.

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The objects reflected upon a child's retina, as his acquaintance with the universe gradually expands, do not explain themselves: they have to be learnt and interpreted one by one before they represent definite ideas to his mind. A savage suddenly transplanted into the midst of civilisation must go through the same process, and begin the interpretation of his surroundings anew. So a traveller, looking out for the first time across a wide tract of landscape, misses the significance of a hundred features of the broad patchwork of light and shadow spread out before him, which to his guide represent familiar hamlets and roads and streams, railways, and distant towns. The same picture is recorded by each retina, but the interpretation has to be supplied by the mind. The eye has thus a varied range of vision: it may take in just so much of an object as one pre-occupied with his thoughts sees of the lane through which he passes, or share that fuller vision which belongs to the

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botanist searching its hedges for rare plants. The bearing of these facts on our inquiry is obvious. In looking at pictures our appreciation varies from the careless, half-trained glance which suffices for recognising the bare identity of the subject treated, to the practised scrutiny of the craftsman versed in the actual use of pigment, aware of difficulties vanquished or avoided, alive to problems of light and shadow, of drawing, modelling, and perspective, and equipped for comparison with the memory of a thousand works scattered across the pages of Art. Between the two lies a wide intermediate range of vision, more or less complete as it approximates to either pole. It needs, however, no expert knowledge to attain to full comprehension: indeed the expert is often so occupied with mere technique as to miss a picture's inner significance. Sympathy and insight, the sense of form and colour eagerly cultivated, the will to seize the artist's purport, and follow the train of his

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thought—these, combined with some comparative knowledge, will be better qualifications than a mere technical familiarity. But we live in an age which has no time to spare for most of these things. They imply patient concentration and study, and a more serious effort than we are prepared to devote to anything of so little account to us as Art. If we look to pictures for entertainment of a mild order it is on the sole condition that our mental energies shall in no way be taxed ; but to demand from us a distinct effort of thought, such as we do not always bestow even upon our politics or the practical affairs which interest us most, seems to us making labour of a pastime.

It may be objected, too, that no such effort is really necessary ; that the test of value for a work of Art is its instant appeal to all, trained or untrained ; that the latter's unbiassed and spontaneous judgment is often more worthy of attention than that of the critic whose

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brain is addled by the very amount of his learning.

This is a familiar argument, and one that perhaps holds good of such great periods of Art as Athens lived through under Pericles, or Italy at the time of the Renaissance. Then were produced, before a people drunk with the love of beauty and responsive to the least artistic appeal, works whose sublime genius won the instant homage that no succeeding age has withheld or questioned. But the times were as exceptional as their works. Only the giants can count at any period on such prompt acceptance, and it is doubtful whether to-day it would fall even to a giant's lot. Certainly the greatest artists of our times have made but slow headway against indifference and misrepresentation. Would it be fanciful to trace a parallelism between the wane of artistic appreciation and the rise of mechanical invention? It will not be disputed that each of the more considerable movements in Nineteenth-

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Century painting only very slowly established itself in the face of ridicule, indifference and, often, actual hostility. We need look no further for evidence of this than to the Pre-Raphaelites, the Barbizon school, Whistler, Manet, and the Impressionists. In each of these instances a small bodyguard, as resolute as it was discerning, stood by and upheld the innovators against a jeering public until the fight was won, and the laurels could no longer be denied.

If there be still some unconvinced, let them reflect that they do not deem themselves qualified, without some preliminary training, to pronounce upon the build of a motor-car, the tone of a violin, the quality of a Persian rug, the points of a pure-bred shorthorn, the style of an author, the purity of a French accent, or other matters whereof no Heaven-sent knowledge is bestowed. But the plain man, who treads reverently there, will rush in without misgiving with his

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opinion on questions of Art, confident enough in his powers of observation to generalise freely about the correspondence of objects with their presentment. That he has not himself noted any but the more usual atmospheric effects, or studied the relations of light and shadow in the human countenance will lead him roundly to deny the truth of an artist's unusual rendering of such subjects. He will count the buttons on a coat, identify the pattern of a tweed, demand a photographic niceness of detail in feature and colouring. In a landscape what most takes his fancy is 'prettiness'—the equivalent of the young lady of the bonbon box in portraiture. Want of 'finish' is his perpetual complaint, evoked by whatever treatment does not give trivial details minutely enough to suit his taste. The lack of straightness in a line, a slip in the drawing—venial faults enough, if the bigger qualities are achieved—will suffice entirely to throw him off his equilibrium, So will an anachronism or a trivial error

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of fact. But all these are matters which have little or no bearing on the main question,—the artist's purpose and its achievement. Among the Chinese as much as a thousand years ago, this was understood. Shên Kua writing in the eleventh century, is thus quoted by Professor Giles: 'In calligraphy and painting soul is more important than form. Most of the good people who look at pictures can point out some slight defect in shape, in position, or in colouring ; but that is the extent of their range. As to those who penetrate to deeper principles, they are very hard to find. It has been said that Wang Wei in his pictures paid no attention whatever to the four seasons. With regard to flowers he would introduce the peach, apricot, hibiscus and water-lily into one and the same scene. I myself possess a picture of his in which there is a banana-tree covered with snow. The idea flashed through his mind and was completed by his hand,—an inspiration of genius. But it is difficult to

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discuss this with the unwashed. . . .
Does not the poet say

“The old masters painted the spirit, they did not
paint the form ;
Mei Shêng, when singing of things, left no
emotion unexpressed.
Those who can ignore the form and seize the
spirit are few ;
But why not apply to verse what to painting
applies so well ? ”

To ‘seize the spirit’—there is the root of the matter : and it is there that for lack of training, time or trouble, our painters so often fall short, and so much oftener our public. If we would seize the spirit we must be prepared to abandon ourselves to a well-tried artist’s guidance in the matter of form : to see with his eyes, follow him forth through unfamiliar scenes, and read into those that are familiar a rendering different from our own. We need but have faith that his vision is clearer than ours, and in the end we shall be repaid ; for it is strange if he do not reveal to us a

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thousand beauties to which, hitherto, we had been blind. To the artist it is given to hear voices and see visions withheld from other men ; his world is peopled, like Hellas of old, with the living impersonations of godlike beauty. For him the Oread still haunts the mountains, and by the flowery margent of secluded streams the Naiads sport at dawn. He may love best the wide open spaces where on moonlit nights the twang of a silver bow may still be heard, and by day the golden car of Phœbus crosses, unchecked, the cloudless Heavens ; but where'er his path lie, it is beset, as by some enchantment, with never-failing visions of beauty. Even in squalid cities, amid the unsightly erections and mechanical devices of modern industry, they do not fail him. The smoke-fed air may reflect at sunset the effulgence of a greater glory than falls upon a purer atmosphere ; a stately pile of white cloud-mountains, clambering into the blue, is all the statelier for the grimy

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roofs that frame it ; the silvery mist that softens unsightly detail can bring forth from the familiar shapes fantastic and startling ; the very rain that makes the streets a quagmire mirrors upon the pavement the reflection of a thousand lights. Or this omnipresent beauty may take human shape and look forth on him from eyes dimmed, perhaps, by age or tears ; it may be revealed in some ill-clad figure, or amid humble company : for it can transcend all limitations of its surroundings.

The artist alone among men is ever aware of that 'interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own,' whose 'footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the morning calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it.' But here and there he may arrest these fleeting traces, and give them lasting form for those among his fellows who have eyes to see. Another Chinese painter, writing six hundred years before the

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one quoted above, has left the following summary of what it is in the power of painting to achieve :

‘To gaze upon the clouds of autumn, a soaring exultation in the soul ; to feel the spring breeze stirring wild exultant thoughts ;—what is there in the possession of gold and jewels to compare with delights like these ? And then, to unroll the portfolio and spread the silk, and to transfer to it the glories of flood and fall, the green forest, the blowing winds, the white water of the rushing cascade, as with a turn of the hand a divine influence descends upon the scene. These are the joys of painting.’

All these, and many another miracle, the magic of painting has already brought to pass. But there remain a million unnoticed aspects of things waiting to be revealed, as Turner and Constable revealed to their generation a freer reading of nature ; or Whistler, in our own, has revealed the subtle vestment of half-toned, delicate harmonies in which his

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inward eye clothed the crude forms of things.

Faith then is the first requisite—faith in the artist's guiding, distrust of our own unaided vision. We can learn to see colour and form, as we *must* learn the rules and technique of cricket, or baseball, or pelota, if we are to look on at those games with any satisfaction. We are apt to condemn what we do not at once understand. Let us rather pause to consider whether what we pronounce the absence of purport in a picture be not really our failure to discover it. And where we are perplexed by a new rendering, it may be worth while before rejecting it to return to nature and test it for ourselves. It may surprise us then to find that shadows can be of every gradation of blue, or purple, or pink: that a newly-turned furrow reflects the sky: that flesh-tones may require the whole range of colours on a palette: that juxtaposition may transform red into purple, purple into blue,

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blue into grey or violet ; that in painting, as in all else, everything is fleeting, nothing fixed. Only thus can we bow ourselves to the conventions which all Art perforce adopts, and learn the language that it speaks.

See by what slow stages the power of seeing has grown, how gradually the artistic consciousness has become enriched. We may surmise that the public for which Giotto painted had noticed many fewer aspects than we of the surrounding universe. But once he and those who followed him had drawn attention to outer form, men began to observe for themselves, to discriminate between shapes of tree and tree, between one bird and another, between the lines of plain and mountain. It was not long before all nature was being avidly explored, and chiefly the anatomy of the human form, which in the hands of Masaccio, Paolo Uccello and Luca Signorelli went far towards recovering the dignity it had borne, artistically,

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among the Greeks. How this reached its pinnacle in the hands of Michael Angelo; how the giants—Raphael, Lionardo and Titian—contributed each a fresh perfection of modelling, drawing or chiaroscuro; how landscape crept in, first as a background to the figures, then brought by the Venetians to greater and greater prominence until finally, in Holland, it became an end in itself; all this may be found in every text-book. Any child could enumerate the great names which form the mile-stones on the road. Our only concern is to note that each one of them meant a definite and wide extension of the powers of human vision. But it was not only the greatest who contributed. Away from the high-roads, on many a track and by-path, the work of enrichment is ever being carried on. To take but a few names at random: Chardin, Pieter de Hoogh, Guardi, Crome, Fantin Latour, Manet, Goya, Degas, Mathieu Maris, are instances, not perhaps from among the very

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greatest, but from among the many important painters who have given a new point of view to the world, and by so much enriched its consciousness. They have left their mark and compelled all who come after to take their vision into account. And the process is a never-ending one ; the world changes before our eyes as one faithful observer after another brings a new rendering to light. The condition of our joining in the advance is that our attitude be a receptive one. We must be anxious to be made to see, distrustful of our own vision, eager for guidance, and yet not so eager as to abandon Nature as our final touchstone ; remembering always that she is fluid, changing, and myriad-featured, and bears little resemblance to the hard-and-fast image we are apt to form of her.

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‘ We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing
And Babel itself with our mirth ;
And o’erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world’s worth ;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.’

—O’SHAUGHNESSY.

VI. IMAGINATION

CO-OPERATION between artist and spectator of itself contributes to the kindling of imagination. We in the West, unless we be of Celtic blood, have little enough of imagination to spare for any but concrete matters. For vast administrative ventures it is forthcoming; we can think in Empires and Continents, and frame big conceptions of a world happy under institutions like our own. We set no bounds to our projects of mechanical discovery or material well-being: we look confidently to the day when all phenomena will be brought within the compass of universal law. Such terms as evolution, monism, naturalism, fire us by their suggestion of all-embracing unification. So, too, do the conceptions of patriotism,

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loyalty to our order, to society or to our church. So all-pervading is the rationalist spirit among us that it coerces even imagination into its service, and grudges to the Arts a mere residue in place of the fortune that should be their birthright. Western painting, as we have tried to show, has been driven to comply with the general demand for exact knowledge. It must be verifiable, correct, and as near to illusion as may be. But we have seen that where everything is said there is nothing left to imagine. By painstaking accumulation of detail a portrait or a landscape may be a faithful copy of the object depicted, and satisfy the requirements of such as demand only to recognise, while, viewed as Art, it may be very little superior to a photograph. True, the genius of a Velasquez, a Hals, a Manet, may invest even the closest imitation with a quality capable of setting imagination to work, and, incidentally, picturesque or historic associations may do the same. There

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are some in whom the most pitiful of daubs, if it purported to represent Joan of Arc, or Richard Cœur de Lion or Charles the First, would stir imagination. But in general we want to see what we know and can recognise, and what we consequently need not bestir ourselves to imagine about. Yet, without knowing it, what we thus ask for is the unessential. 'A story' says Shelley 'is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connection than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect: a poem is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature.' Precisely analogous is

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the difference between the literal work such as the majority of our public demand, and the work which calls imagination into play. The thrill which an unfinished sketch—some mere nexus of lines dashed upon the paper—may awaken in another artist, differs altogether in kind from the comfortable feeling, something akin to that of hunger allayed, which ensues upon the recognition of resemblance between an object and its representation. But it is the former which means true appreciation, not the latter. This is, at the best, but a restricted field ; negative rather than positive ; conducive to criticism rather than enjoyment. It lays chief stress upon scrupulous copying of external form ; whereas imagination sees from within, and is little concerned with superficial resemblances. The need, then, is to make susceptible to subtler influences an imagination which at present, in so far as it can be stirred at all, is most readily responsive to the

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sensationalism of French Salons, or the sentimentality so rife in our English exhibitions, or to mere trick painting such as portrays the Christ with moving eyes. Even in these naïve predilections we may recognise the existence, in rudimentary form, of a sense capable of development ; but it is a development to be reached solely by persistent and calculated appeal from the artist and a more receptive attitude in the spectator. In both, mental effort is the one and indispensable condition.

‘ Vous dessinez une femme,’ said the old painter in Balzac’s *Le Chef-d’œuvre inconnu*, ‘ mais vous ne la voyez pas ! Ce n’est pas ainsi que l’on parvient à forcer l’arcane de la nature. Votre main reproduit, sans que vous y pensiez, le modèle que vous avez copié chez votre maître. Vous ne descendez pas assez dans l’intimité de la forme, vous ne la poursuivez pas avec assez d’amour et de persévérance dans ses détours et dans ses fuites. La beauté est une chose sévère

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et difficile qui ne se laisse point attendre ainsi ; il faut attendre ses heures, l'épier, la presser et l'enlacer étroitement pour la forcer à se rendre. La forme est un Protée bien plus insaisissable et plus fertile en replis que le Protée de la Fable ; ce n'est qu'après de longs combats qu'on peut la contraindre à se montrer sous son véritable aspect. Vous autres, vous vous contentez de la première apparence qu'elle vous livre, ou tout au plus de la seconde, ou de la troisième : ce n'est pas ainsi qu'agissent les victorieux lutteurs ! Ces peintres invaincus ne se laissent pas tromper à tous ces faux-fuyants, ils persévèrent jusqu'à ce que la nature en soit réduite à se montrer toute nue et dans son véritable esprit.'

It is a speech which sends us soaring into the region of Art's eternal truths. But all this wrestling and struggle, the tortured brain, the painful striving to express, are likely enough to be lost upon the casual beholder. Even if he recognise the final mastery, he has little

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enough inkling of all that it implies—the victory won in agony of spirit, and by the sweat of the brow. He, too, must be taught to understand—to follow step by step the arduous path leading upward from the flats of the obvious and the photographic, to the heights, bathed in clear light, where only Art can live. Gradually he must learn to dispense with more and more of the detail which at first seemed so important: to pierce through externals to the core of things: to interpret the conventions which are Art's shorthand for recording its impressions. And at last he will come to full comprehension of the saying: 'La mission de l'Art n'est pas de copier la nature mais de l'exprimer.'

From Frith to Whistler is a far cry, but the journey must be taken. Only when we have explored the limits of our favourite waters shall we venture forth upon a wider sea. If we are to end by admiring omission as much as

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at first we admired inclusion we must be ready, from the resources of our own imagination, to make good what is omitted.

It is a large demand, a demand which may well appear altogether incompatible with the practical energies and needs of a matter-of-fact race. Yet is it entirely unattainable? This faculty, which enables a man to project himself out of his own personality (and thereby gives him a vantage ground over the rest of the animal creation) is active enough in the young. Make-believe is one of the chiefest of pleasures to every normal child, and often the scantier his materials the livelier his invention. But with individuals as with races, imagination dwindles as years increase; it is keener in a child than in a grown man, in savages than in highly civilised people. In fact, in proportion as the outer universe presents more or less of mystery, so does imagination seem to flourish or contract.

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It is no part of our educational system to attempt to keep it alive. We anticipate rather than defer the moment when—

‘Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy.’

Literature is stripped of the fulness of its living presence and laid upon the dissecting-table, that its skeleton may provide an object lesson in the anatomy of words and syntax. History is taught piece-meal, severed from the philosophic conceptions that can alone give it significance: science, equally, must be learnt in water-tight compartments. Vague notions of ‘mental discipline’ decree the removal of all the flesh-and-blood interest which might give life to the dry bones of learning and awaken curiosity. Over and apart from these disciplinary ideas which would make education a penance rather than an ever-expanding interest, are the utilitarian notions pervading most modern

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thought. Learning must be turned to quick account, and tested by its convertibility into currency: such is the more and more insistent cry of modern opinion. What wonder if we take things for granted rather than marvel at them; if we hold that there is nothing miraculous rather than that everything is miracle! Some training in freehand drawing and the elements of music might be a discipline for eye and ear which would later expand into a pleasure; but we make little attempt to give it. There is, indeed, a firm conviction buried deep in the average British breast, that such matters, like the love of poetry, are effeminate, irreconcilable with the manly qualities which are our pride. There may, too, be some vague underlying notion that imagination is a hindrance rather than a help in getting the plain work of the world accomplished; and this, in the face of the daily accumulating evidence that half

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our legislation, for want of it, remains abortive, and that in administration, finance, politics and industry, those who have it invariably outdistance their competitors! As to science, ethics and philosophy, it would hardly be too much to say that all the great forward steps have been taken only by its help. Neither Galileo nor Columbus, Harvey, Newton, or Darwin, would have come without it upon their discoveries; nor, we may surmise would the great teachers of moral truths.

The fact is that the narrower our horizon, and the closer our confinement within the exigencies of daily life, the less are the opportunities for advance. Only imagination can roll back the encompassing cloud-rack and reveal the blue vistas beyond which lie the habitations of the gods. It is fluid, and moves with the changing times; the hard-and-fast conceptions of the plain man are static.

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The problem, once more, is how to divert to the service of Art some of the imaginative faculty which, if only exercised upon practical matters, never attains to fulness of stature. We have seen that it exists and can be evoked, even in the most matter-of-fact. Oratory can arouse it: the oratory of the pulpit, the demagogue, or the Revivalist meeting. The most stolid can be worked up to enthusiasm for a cause: there is a potential martyr in every man. The popular imagination is ready to respond to emblems: the British Lion, the Stars and Stripes, John Bull—the skill to evoke such images is part of a political leader's stock in trade. There is evidence, too, in the recent series of Historic Pageants, of unsuspected capacity for reviving and living again the memories and triumphs of by-gone days. The material, in short, is there, untended, choked with the thorns of actualities, but withal a plant capable of flowering

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even in our Northern soil. If it were not so how should we have come to possess what is perhaps the finest imaginative literature in the world? Miss Loane, in one of her books describing work among the humblest City-dwellers, testifies to the fact that a taste for adornment takes precedence of utility even in the poorest. Witness the cheap ornament, the oleograph picture, which are the pride of so many humble dwellings; the Sunday finery of the children and women. Witness, in a higher class, the readiness among factory workers to welcome such experiments as the dramatic clubs and musical societies which many of the more enlightened employers are starting among them. Wherever the lead is given the response is prompt. Imagination, like every other faculty of the mind, can only be saved from atrophy by constant exercise. Let it be one of the chief aims of education to co-operate, first contriving that

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exercise, and then seeing that the growing plant is furnished with befitting nourishment and guided a little in its early admirations, and there should be little difficulty in awakening so lively an interest in painting as to make it, perhaps for the first time, a part of the national life.

THE UNSEEN

‘ . . . this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.’

—SHAKESPEARE’S *Sonnets*.

VII. THE UNSEEN

IT was not without misgivings that we spoke of the power of painting to 'suggest the unseen world'; for the associations of the phrase are tainted with mysticism; and mysticism, whether it be that of orthodoxy, of 'new thought,' or of psychical research, is equally unpalatable to a generation imbued with scientific conceptions. The discoveries of the nineteenth century in the physical sciences have converged by different streams upon a general consensus in favour of a mechanical explanation of the universe. That all forms of matter, organic and inorganic, are alike subject to the operation of mechanical laws, that spirit and matter cannot interact, that change is explainable only in terms of motion, has become almost axiomatic

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with the century of whose discoveries the law of the conservation of energy stands out as perhaps the most characteristic. It is a materialism whose supreme faith is identical with that formulated by Laplace when he maintained that 'if the state of the material universe at any one moment of time could be completely described, it would be possible in principle to arrive by calculation at the complete description of it at any other moment of its history.'

This creed in its crudest form constitutes a monism attractive at first by its very comprehensiveness. Life is conceived of as originating by chemico-physical action under propitious atmospheric conditions, and working out its continuous evolution from the single cell organism to the human brain: intelligence as merely the sublimation of the instinctive desires for food and reproduction: soul or spirit merely intelligence in its highest form: immortality

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a myth, unless we may so describe the transmission of the imperishable element in the germ-cell from individual to individual: and so on through all creation, mechanism being throughout the governing principle. Held first solely by men of science, these views have filtered out among a wider public quick to be influenced by their consequences, even when incompetent to make good the steps by which they were arrived at. Thus the bulk of educated opinion is to-day materialistic, and in a corresponding degree the authority of orthodox creeds has become relaxed. To the school of thought whose concern is to find a rational explanation for all phenomena and bring everything within the operation of great mechanical laws any hint of the existence of a world unseen is only calculated to provoke irritation.

Still, it is only actual scientific workers who are, as a rule, impreguably entrenched in this faith. The outer public, prompt though it be to grow laxer in its ob-

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servance of irksome restrictions imposed by older creeds, is yet not so completely emancipated as to be able to dispense with the security which these creeds offered.

The very cheerlessness of a cosmogony exclusively material sends back many a half-convert to his earlier faith in times of stress. The consolations of religion are indispensable, and in some form will probably remain indispensable to a large proportion of any random segment of humanity. Students of metaphysics, even, are among the number ; for since it seems that for any solution whatever assumptions must be made, there are thinkers who find the assumptions of time-honoured creeds easier of acceptance than any other. These are among the weightiest units of that vast but scattered army to which the unseen is no meaningless phrase. They play the part of supports to the advance battalions over which the banner of orthodoxy flies ; and their well-ordered fire covers

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retreat from positions of difficulty into which the ardour of their less-instructed comrades sometimes lead.

It is not only the ignorant and superstitious who are ready to regard the common happenings of life as fraught with the influences of mysterious unseen powers. Some rational sanction for a non-material creed is eagerly sought by those among the scientific themselves whom mechanistic theories do not satisfy. Many leading physicists—among them Lord Kelvin, Sir W. Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir J. J. Thomson—have found themselves unable to maintain that any purely mechanical explanation of the life and evolution of organisms can be complete.

Thus it is but a small circle, and that composed chiefly of men of science, which maintains an uncompromising hostility to suggestions of a world transcending the world of matter. For the remainder there exists at least a desire, often even an anxiety, for a less purely material

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faith, even if it involve the admission of unseen and unknown elements.

Art, in its earliest forms, was generally an attempt to depict the supernatural beings or forces whose influence was felt to overshadow humanity. Such, in its beginnings, was the Art of Egypt, of Assyria, of the Far East, of pagan Greece and of Europe in the Dark Ages: and such to-day is the Art of many of the races whose development has not travelled beyond its earliest stage. When most phenomena are isolated experiences behind which may lurk some manifestation of the supernatural, and the dread of divine resentment is never far distant, it is not to be wondered at that primitive artists should make these unseen Powers the subject for their earliest efforts. And thus, whether in the shape of natural forces personified, evil-working influences to be propitiated, or legendary heroes raised to divine rank, the supernatural has ever been the chief concern of nascent Art. We have seen that both

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in Eastern and Western painting imitation, for its own sake, only appeared at a later stage. And this was doubtless due to more than one cause. Mystery began to wane in proportion as the realm of knowledge widened. As more and more of nature was brought within the field of law, so did the field of the supernatural dwindle. The isolated phenomena which of old gave play to imagination and could be treated artistically in numerous picturesque ways, once sorted out into categories and neatly labelled and docketed, lose the glamour which illuminates the unknown, and become prosaic facts in an unromantic universe of exact classifications. How much richer at once, and readier, was the appeal to artistic emotion when land and water, sun and moon and stars had each their own radiant personification in human shape idealised, and, though gods, closely intermingled with the affairs of men: when fauns and nymphs and dryads kept the woodlands and the banks

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of silvery streams, and every fireside had its own tutelary deity : when the lightning was Jove's thunder-bolt, and the moonbeams might reveal the virgin goddess at her hunting. How poor in emotional significance seems the world of molecules and cells, atoms and electrons in comparison !

And meanwhile the second cause emerges. Art, at first content merely with service, had suddenly, as we saw, acquired independence and attained to a conception of its own possibilities. Simultaneously with the exhaustion of its first subject-matter it discovered within itself unsuspected but limitless powers. It had restricted itself to one field ; and suddenly the whole wide plain, with its woods and streams and hamlets, the hills at the horizon-line and the over-arching sky were brought within its scope. So from suggesting the unknown it set itself ardently to copying the known. Thus both the extension of scientific knowledge about the universe

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and the growth of technical skill in Art contributed to the substitution of the seen for the felt world as the subject of artistic representation.

Of these causes the second was probably preponderant; for though gods and goddesses were replaced by physical laws, and the play of ardent fancy must give way to scientific formulæ, still, when all was said and done, only a small corner of the field of knowledge had been enclosed. By contrast with the preceding chaos the area brought under cultivation might well seem vast, yet for all the neatness of its boundaries and the excellence of its husbandry, it remained but a strip of tillage set in the midst of a vaster tract of forest still to be explored. Neither boundaries nor methods were fixed; each must yield to the necessity of fresh discovery. The laws that seemed most unalterable have ever anew to submit to readjustment—become often enough mere working hypotheses which, having served their day, must be cast aside.

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Our ignorance is greater than our knowledge. The unknown still encompasses us. The fundamental mystery of life itself is as far as ever from solution : and our learned men are as sedulous to-day as in the day of Socrates in disputing about the existence or non-existence of the soul. We have found many a law converting apparent manifestations of the supernatural into commonplace fact : but even if the miracles of one generation have become the natural order of the next, there is no lack of problems awaiting solution. The more we discover, the less reason do we find to expect finality ; and experience should warn those who would escape the prejudices which oppressed the contemporaries of Copernicus, of Socrates and of Christ.

But adherents of even the crudest form of materialism would hardly dispute the existence in the background of our universe of hidden forces which our science has not yet laid bare, and whose work-

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ings are only surmised, though we seem to see evidence of their effect. As little could they question the reality of phenomena for which we find no sanction in the theories of evolutionary science, which the strict logic of the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest must necessarily exclude ; but which nevertheless remain the condition of moral progress. Such phenomena are duty, self-sacrifice, truth to an ideal, and the ethical virtues generally. Once we are compelled to postulate something co-existent with, but other than, matter, a door is opened wide enough to let in almost every conception of super-human agencies—from the anthropomorphic deities of primitive religions to the ‘Absolute’ of the idealists. Ever fewer are the exponents of the rigid materialism which begins and ends with matter, and holds that there is nothing which cannot be explained as the resultant of mechanical forces. The majority even of materialists find themselves compelled to accept some theory of consciousness whereby it

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is either represented as the effect and concomitant of physical processes, or as running parallel with such processes though without in any way interacting with them. In the latter case the psychical is regarded as merely concomitant, and neither the cause nor the effect, of the physical. Yet however ingenious the reasoning of the supporters of this view, it seems to the animistic party to involve a dualism which enables them to take fresh hope and contend with renewed energy for the existence of some psychical principle independent of matter.

But discussion of these matters may be left to experts. Art is concerned less with facts than fancy ; and were there in all the earth but six men left with a belief in the unseen, it would remain Art's legitimate province. And even if we accept the material standpoint, we accept as its corollary a system as inscrutable in its origin and its working as any supernatural agency. The conception of Universal Law, as binding in the most dis-

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tant solar system as in our own, is hardly less inspiring or less mysterious than the old mythologies. Atoms and energy, heat and light and sound, are subject to rules of unyielding rigour, as unvarying and predictable as the tides : why should all this stir in us less wonder than did the simple theogonies in an earlier age ? We know as little of the destiny of things as of their origins—as little of the growth of cells as of solar systems. There are thinkers who attribute consciousness to both. Even for the learned, then, belief in an unseen does but bridge boundless abysses still waiting to be fathomed. And that from which even the learned cannot escape, and which, for the ignorant and superstitious means comfort and salvation, for the Artist must be the warp whereon his most moving creations will ever be woven.

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‘ Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought,
Nor wrong the thought, missing the mediate word.’
—*The Ring and the Book.*

VIII. SUGGESTION

IN treating of the power of Art to suggest the unseen we laid no special stress upon this faculty of suggestion ; but it now calls for some closer attention.

Whatever else the new science of Psychical Research has achieved or failed to achieve, it has at least let in certain illuminating rays upon the action of mind over body. It has proved beyond all question that under the influence of hypnotic suggestion—and even sometimes under ordinary suggestion—definite bodily physiological changes have been brought about. Sores, wounds, and skin eruptions have not only been induced but healed—physical injuries have been supported without pain—muscular feats performed completely beyond the sub-

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ject's ordinary strength ; unseen and undiagnosed ailments treated and cured. These are but a few of the phenomena for which the scientific evidence is irrefutable ; the records of the Society, as well as Mr. Myers's book, are full of them. Christian Science and the 'New Thought,' doubtless owe many of their miracles to a more or less instinctive use of like methods. These methods all depend in varying degrees upon the power of suggestion. Whether the suggestion be external or self-inspired is indifferent ; in either, mental action may be induced resulting in direct corporal change. The fact is indisputable. Thus suggestion has come to be recognised as more than the mysterious agent which crops up sporadically in sundry forms across the pages of history, and was doubtless so often put to dark or suspicious uses. Investigated scientifically it falls within the range of law, and proves to be a force of widely scattered incidence. Like our forefathers, we are still mostly uncon-

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scious when we employ this force ; yet we do so nearly as frequently as M. Jourdain unconsciously spoke prose, for it enters into most conditions of human intercourse. - It moulds opinion, colours the likes and dislikes of an indifferent and uninstructed public, helps to make and unmake the fashion in many a thing beyond mere dress. To the physician it is worth more than drugs, and to the orator more than eloquence. It is the stock-in-trade of the demagogue, the society leader, the juggler. In education it is paramount, from the nursery to the college. It enters into every human relationship, from love to commerce ; creates prestige ; doubles the prosperity of the prosperous and the distrust of the diffident. As we have seen, it strengthens the hold of spirit over matter, and may confer upon men a self-mastery undreamed of, even to the healing of fleshly ills. It gives us the vision of more than our eyes can see, and hearing beyond the testimony of our ears. It is the begetter of visions

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and hallucinations, the handmaid of hypnotism, the foster-child of magic. How great then must be its rôle in Art, whose very existence depends on the creation of sufficient illusion to make the spectator accept its conventions for something that they are not ; which passes off flat surfaces for intersecting planes, for modelled and rounded figures, for distance and dwindling perspective, and makes mere blurs of pigment upon a strip of canvas do duty for heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.

M. Bergson goes so far as to propound the theory that 'the object of Art is to put to sleep the active, or rather resistant, powers of our personality, and thus to bring us into a state of perfect responsiveness in which we realise the idea that is suggested to us and sympathise with the feeling that is expressed. In the processes of Art we shall find, in a weakened form, a refined and in some measure spiritualised version of the processes commonly used to induce the

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state of hypnosis. Thus, in music, the rhythm and measure suspend the normal flow of our sensations and ideas by causing our attention to swing to and fro between fixed points, and they take hold of us with such force that even the faintest imitation of a groan will suffice to fill us with the utmost sadness. If musical sounds affect us more powerfully than the sounds of nature, the reason is that nature confines itself to *expressing* feelings, whereas music *suggests* them to us.' (*Time and Free Will*, chap. 1. p. 14.)

So, too, in poetry, the movement of the rhythm lulls our soul into forgetfulness of self, and fills the void with images in which the poet's emotion takes hold of us and we become identified with it. In the plastic arts and in architecture, the writer traces a similar process at work. In sculpture 'the pale immobility of the stone causes the feeling expressed or the movement just begun to appear as if they were fixed

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for ever, absorbing our thought and our will in their ownⁿ eternity.' In architecture, 'the symmetry of form, the indefinite repetition of the same architectural motive, causes our faculty of perception to oscillate between the same and the same again, and gets rid of those customary incessant changes which in ordinary life bring us back without ceasing to the consciousness of our own personality: even the faint suggestion of an idea will then be enough to make the idea fill the whole of our mind. Thus Art aims at impressing feelings on us rather than expressing them: it suggests them to us, and willingly dispenses with the imitation of nature when it finds some more efficacious means.'

According to this subtle view, in short, Art proceeds by hypnotising the self into a state of passive receptivity, and filling the empty stage of consciousness with the figures of its own creation. Thus, M. Bergson sums up: 'every feeling experienced by us will assume an æsthetic

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character provided that it has been *suggested* and not *caused*.'

It may be questioned whether the average artist hitherto has been any more conscious of the nature of the power which M. Bergson thus ascribes to him than most of us are of the action of our lungs in breathing or of the muscles when we walk. How far it is capable of being put to conscious uses is a question that it will remain to consider. For the moment there is another aspect of the matter demanding attention:—Under what conditions is this quasi-hypnotic power, even if not fully conscious, employable with advantage in Art? may it not, for instance, become an influence to be combated and checked?

The immediate bearing of these questions on much of our modern Art is at once evident. Æsthetic receptivity rises and falls with different epochs. In early Victorian days its level was low. From the middle of the century the gauges

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would have marked a rising of the waters. There appeared a greater alertness in matters of Art ; and it was felt in widening circles. To this both Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites had contributed. The result was an increasing number of eager but only half-trained votaries of Art, always on the look-out for new and living movements, anxious to admire, yet not always capable of discriminating between worthy and unworthy objects of admiration.

Such a public is the easiest hypnotised, and almost in proportion to its desire to admire. It is eager to meet the painter halfway, and in the very mood to lend itself to suggestion. But in all suggestion, if it is to be used to the full, the subject must be under control. The painter must know both what he wishes to suggest and the means by which best to suggest it. Then only will the co-operation of the spectator, being under direction, prove fruitful. Now for a century and more Art has tended to

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grow increasingly vague and indeterminate. Both in literature and painting the reaction against a dead classical tradition has led to an impatience of restraint which perhaps has carried liberty to the point of licence. Emancipation from all rule but the promptings of individual fancy appeared the directest way of escape from the tyranny of form which had become formalism. Undue stress laid upon reason had come to seem death to imagination. The glamour of the marvellous had thrown the Aristotelian principle of probability into oblivion. Art, in short, was undergoing the pendulum-swing of a romantic movement. An unrestrained individualism seemed the condition of its being spontaneous and vital. Impatience of limitation, desire for expansion, had led to various forms of impressionism.

It is obvious that such a movement would make free use of suggestion. It would lead away from clear-cut conceptions and towards indefinite reverie,

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sometimes completely sacrificing content to expression. And thus it might easily be made to cover the absence both of definite purpose and technical skill in the artist. It would be easy to cite instances in which a public, eagerly amenable to suggestion, has read into sheer incompetence a significance of its own supplying, and given a short-lived fame to vague and incoherent work.

But it is only on emerging from his 'prenticeship, a master of technique, that an artist can put suggestion to its proper use. Till then his dependence on it will but mask the fact that he is controlled by his media of expression instead of controlling them. Once he has learnt to give to every sweep of his brush and every touch of his pencil its full and intended effect, he may proceed to demand from suggestion that final sense of profundity and mystery which no technique alone can convey. But while he is still at the mercy of random and uncalculated effects, he is but counting on the

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generosity of the spectator's imagination to veil his own confusion of thought and hand, and interpret his own half-conceptions. Contrast with this the unerring instinct that shows a Rembrandt the point beyond which technical skill cannot carry him ; and see with what certainty he will appeal to the imagination to contribute the crowning touches to his work. Never, with the very great, are we in danger of mistaking inarticulateness for sublimity.

These considerations may serve to give a clue to the question which arose sometime back : viz., how far this power of suggestion is capable of being consciously used.

It is evident first that it will only yield to the full of its capacity in the hand of a master supremely skilled in the management of technique. True, it will often stand the unpractised in good stead ; yet rather, as it would seem, by accident than at the bidding of his will.

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But a mere master of technique may be incapable of rendering more than the most literal and prosaic representation of objects. His achievement may reach the height of realism; his figures may almost live upon the canvas; and yet he may fail to evoke the faintest breath of that atmosphere of mystery and permanence which can lift even the commonest subject above the press of actualities. That something more which is needed — and which even so great a master as Frans Hals could not command — springs from the quality of the creating mind behind the supple fingers. The painter must have something to suggest — thoughts, yearnings, visions; something beyond the mere external hard-and-fastness of appearance; ‘obstinate questionings of sense and outward things.’ Hear M. Bergson again: ‘The merit of a work of Art is not measured so much by the power with which the suggested feeling takes hold

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of us as by the richness of this feeling itself: in other words, besides degrees of intensity we instinctively distinguish degrees of depth and elevation. If this last concept be analysed, it will be seen that the feelings and thoughts which the artist suggests to us express and sum up a more or less considerable part of his history. If the Art which gives only sensations is an inferior Art, the reason is that analysis often fails to discover in a sensation anything beyond the sensation itself. But the greater number of emotions are instinct with a thousand sensations, feelings or ideas which pervade them: each one is then a state unique of its kind and indefinable, and it seems that we should have to re-live the life of the subject who experiences it if we wished to grasp it in its original complexity. Yet the artist aims at giving us a share in this emotion, so rich, so personal, so novel, and at enabling us to experience what he cannot make

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us understand. . . . Thus will be broken down the barrier interposed by time and space between his consciousness and ours: and the richer in ideas and the more pregnant with sensations and emotions is the feeling within whose limits the artist has brought us, the deeper and the higher shall we find the beauty thus expressed.'

This passage raises, and to the writer seems to solve unanswerably, the vexed problem of 'values' in Art. To the romantic way of thinking, subject is more or less immaterial provided our feelings about it are deep enough. But see to how great a disproportion between emotion and the intrinsic importance of its object such a doctrine may lead. Choice of subject may in itself be a supreme revelation of mind. We cannot, without a sense of discomfort, become aware of an enormous expenditure of emotion upon a theme of trivial import. For it cannot seriously be contended that all things are equally

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beautiful. There are degrees of beauty, and we must needs judge of them in relation to human idiosyncrasy and preference. 'Real and objective beauty,' says Professor Santayana, 'in contrast to a vagary of individuals, means only an affinity to a more prevalent and lasting susceptibility, a response to a more general and fundamental demand. And the keener discrimination, by which the distance between beautiful and ugly things is increased, far from being a loss of æsthetic insight, is a development of that faculty by the exercise of which beauty comes into the world.'

If this view be true, it follows that the deeper and better furnished the mind of a creative artist, the higher is his work likely to rank in the scale of æsthetic values. Nor is any subject of his selection likely to prove unequal to the weight of emotion of which he may choose to make it the vehicle.

But this is something of a digres-

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sion : and it is time to attempt to summarise the results of our inquiry.

If we adopt M. Bergson's view—and to the writer it appears equally convincing and ingenious—all Art exercises upon the spectator a quasi-hypnotic influence : first conjuring his resistance by its rhythm, and the recurrent artificiality of its design ; and then suggesting to his soothed and receptive consciousness whatever images it will. The richer an artist's mind the more fertile and powerful will be his suggestions : and further, if these are to tell to the uttermost, his media of expression must first be brought to the highest pitch of technical mastery.

Now it is clear that the more 'finished' a work of Art, the less effort will as a rule be called for from the spectator. The more told, the less left to imagine. A sketch, or an unfinished drawing to a practised eye and fertile imagination is often more pregnant with

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suggestion than any finished work : which is merely equivalent to saying that some minds do the creative part better themselves. It will, then, be a mark of the highest genius when a work in which 'finish' has been carried to the furthest possible point succeeds in setting the creative faculty at work in the beholder ; and, having told everything that external artifice can tell, awakens the co-operation of that inward eye whose visions no brush can ever limn nor language utter.

It is tempting, by way of illustration, to seek, and try to analyse, one such work — a work, namely, in which intense suggestive power is superadded to supreme technical skill. To find it we must needs look among the giants — those rare ones in whom imagination was matched with equal powers of eye and hand ; and thus the choice is speedily narrowed down. Some half dozen of great names at once suggest themselves, any one of which

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would equally fulfil our purpose. If from among them we select Tintoretto, it is because in no other painter, perhaps, did imagination soar to conceptions of such sublimity and vastness; while in technical skill, taken at his high-water mark in such work as the 'Miracle of St. Mark,' he has never been surpassed. Let us, however, select not from among those disturbed and crowded canvases in which the swiftness of his brush seems barely able to keep pace with the marvellous fertility of his invention; but one of the quiet easel pictures, designed for the adornment of a smaller room in that stately palace of the Doges which contains so much of his finest work. Here it is as though the restless, fervid brain, circumscribed by the narrow compass of a frame, did but transmute into delicacy of handling what it must forgo in range and magnitude: so that the work, far from suffering in technical merit by reduc-

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tion of scale, was if anything the gainer.

The more familiar our example, the better for our purpose. We will not then hesitate to choose one of the best-known of all Tintoret's pictures—the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' in the Ante-Collegio, or Ambassador's waiting-room of the Doges' Palace.

It is almost superfluous to dwell upon beauties of design and execution which are so familiar; yet each detail will well bear fresh study. Regarded merely as a pattern of sinuous, breathing lines, the picture gives to the eye that instant satisfaction which only perfect balance can afford. Each of the three figures in isolation would be beautiful: combined they gain far more than three-fold enhancement. The composition is of almost geometrical simplicity, each curve and mass offset by some answering rhythm. The meeting hands, for instance, which are the centre of interest, would fall just at the inter-

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secting point of lines joining the opposite corners of the picture. Parallel to these, and thus converging on the centre, lie the four principal direction lines into which the composition roughly falls. The background spaces framed by the limbs of the figures balance each other in about equal masses. The upper contour of the floating figure would combine with the right shoulder of the Ariadne to form almost the arc of a circle. Each separate figure, in its general direction, would form another arc. So, too, the smaller curves answer and supplement each other: the whole work, in fact, is built up of curves, whose vigour is equal to their grace. These are but details; and even to point them out may seem fanciful. Yet they are worth noting, if only as an illustration of M. Bergson's theory of the quasi-hypnotic action of Art, and of the value of the curve in this connection as suggesting continuance in contrast

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to the interruption caused by angles and jerky lines.

There is a restfulness in all great Art: and the mere spacing of masses and interweaving of lines, which we often only apprehend instinctively, doubtless induces in the mind that sense of rhythmical movement which leaves the theatre of consciousness free for the impressions to be suggested. The three figures fill the canvas, yet so perfectly are they combined that there seems room in it besides for the whole infinity of sea and sky. Thus a picture, almost diminutive by comparison with the painter's habitual work, becomes large in its composition, its lines and grouping.

In tone, by contrast with the glow and splendour of the neighbouring rooms—the very shrine, *par excellence*, of Venetian colour—this soberer harmony may at first seem almost too much subdued. But linger awhile before it, and as you gaze the subtly

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contrived juxtaposition of tints will gather a warmth and fulness that is nothing less than brilliant. Rarely outside the East do we see economy of colour-scheme count for so much.

As to the quality of the flesh-painting, where will you find it bettered? These figures range from dazzling whiteness to vigorous olive, through every tender gradation of flesh-tint, the high lights being thrown into prominence, as Tintoret alone knew how, by contrasted bands of shadow. Where was there ever modelling of a tenderer delicacy than in this Ariadne's breast and neck, or the Venus's foreshortened back? This floating figure is admittedly one of the great achievements of painting. Air is its natural medium; and herein it differs from most of the other flying figures of Art. The play of light, here outlining the diaphanous drapery, there reflected in the modelling of the back, is of an inexhaustible loveliness.

This is but to single out some of many

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beauties. Note, for instance, things of such decorative value as the outline of the crown of vine-leaves upon the wine-god's head against the blue background ; and again, the white sail of the truant Theseus, about to melt into the distant haze and vanish. Note the whole bold contour of the figures. But these outward beauties, after all, have been admired a thousand times. It is as an instance of suggestive power that we came to consider the picture ; and it is that claim which we must endeavour to make good. For on the face of it this is but one among several beautiful renderings of an old familiar legend from the Greek mythology. True, if it did no more than renew for us beautifully the vision of Ariadne's desertion and despair and the swift drying of her tears, it would be welcome. Titian's masterpiece in the National Gallery does this, and recreates for us, by perhaps one of the most amazing imaginative flights in all Art, the living spirit of Greek myth-

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ology. But this trio of Tintoret's, less realistic by far than that wondrous Bacchanalian rout, less complete and imagined in its outer rendering of the story, has perhaps a deeper emotional value. Like everything that Tintoret touched, it is a new conception of the subject ; and this alone serves to arrest the attention, which, having dwelt awhile in contemplation of it, is the readier to be led on to thoughts of a wider import.

Here, as with all the greatest works of Art, the particularities of space and time are transcended. These beings no more belong to one age or country than do Prospero and Hamlet. We are carried into a region where humanity's imperfect hints of beauty are found fully realised. There is nothing to disturb our contemplation of the grandeur of elemental things—sunlight and air and water, and the human form. 'The year's at the spring, and day's at the morn' we feel ; and the world is in its

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infancy. Life is joyous, robust, and innocent : and this union of a beautiful daughter of earth with the god of joy touches nearly upon the fundamental mysteries of life and love and renewal. In the yearning of his eyes is written all the ardour and passion of youth as yet untinged with lust : in her downcast gaze, and half-reluctant yielding, all womanhood is expressed. Here, on the broad bosom of earth, love is as natural and as beautiful as the attraction of the butterfly to the flower, or the bird to his mate. Stripped of the atmosphere of unhealthy mystery with which modern civilisation is wont to clothe things of the flesh, it is seen filled with the grace and purity of nature and knows neither shame nor offence.

The beauty of physical things is re-echoed in many a minor detail—the flushed cloud forming the background to Ariadne's profile ; the sunlight glinting in her hair ; the sky and sea that flow together through every soft gradation of

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blue and green ; the clustered grapes and vine-leaves with which the god is girdled.

It is a pagan legend, and a frankly pagan rendering, we may be told. What if it be ? All beauty is one, as the seas and oceans are one. Mind can reveal itself only through external things, which all can recognise ; but it may raise them to so high a power that the actual is far transcended, and we pass into the realm of the infinite.

These, after all, are but the imaginings of an over-fanciful brain ; so our objector may urge. The picture is well enough, but all this that you find in it beside its obvious content, might equally well be read into many another work. Then these works, too, I answer, will possess suggestive power, and might equally well have been taken as our illustration. Once admit that such visions can be suggested and the case is proved. It remains for the future to seek how such suggestive power may be deliberately employed. Hitherto its

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use has been for the most part empirical and instinctive ; but if ever it stand obedient to the artist's will, responsive to his slightest bidding, a new era for Art will surely have dawned.



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‘All Art that is not mere story-telling, or mere portraiture, is symbolic, and has the purpose of those symbolic talismans which mediæval magicians made with complex colours and forms, and bade their patients ponder over daily, and guard with holy secrecy ; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence ’—W. B. YEATS.

IX. THE SPIRITUAL

IT is time to cry a halt and look round ; for from the point that we have reached we can behold both the summit near at hand and the zigzags of the path by which we mounted.

Devious though the way may have appeared, our eyes were ever fixed upon the goal ahead : and the widest loops and bendings of our course were in reality bringing us nearer to it. We saw that the rôle of Art was no longer what it had been : that the surge of scientific and material interests had swept it apart till in the general life of to-day it was of little or no account. But we endeavoured to show that true progress is of the spirit, and that the spirit's nourishment is not to be sought in the realm of the material. It is good

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—it is even essential—that we should strive unceasingly to secure the bettering of houses and food and medical attendance, until all men share equally in comfort ; but this is not the sole end of progress, nor even the principal end. If it were, how dreary a future should we not have to look forward to ! It is our undoubted business to see that life in conditions whose very existence is a disgrace to the well-to-do becomes henceforth impossible : and then having razed and levelled and rebuilt the outer housings of existence to our satisfaction, to turn our attention to what is more essential—the furnishing of the interior. Here, among the things of spirit, is the true sphere of progress. The Art which gives us nothing more elevated than ourselves and our finitude to think on cannot in the long run satisfy us. It is from ourselves that we want to escape—to be made to feel the existence of something greater to strive and fight and hope for. And once made aware of it,

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we may haply recognise that not happiness, but rather the fashioning of souls is the aim, and welcome even suffering and struggle and care for what we can make of them.

For the moment, however, our Art has been caught within the scientific vortex and swept along with it. And this we tried to show to be one cause of its present negligible rôle. For our contention was that Art, to make any general appeal, must be spiritual, must be felt to pierce the hard-and-fastness of circumstance, and point to reality beyond. The best things we know lie beyond the utilitarian and the material: as when spirit attains to realisation through abnegation of self, or by religious or æsthetic emotion; in courage, endurance or self-sacrifice. These manifestations of spirit in the moral sphere all can appreciate: the æsthetic appeal demands special gifts and training. But the few who possess them may spread the leaven of their influence through wider and wider circles,

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until the many, even if they cannot enjoy on purely artistic grounds, can yet feel the presence of some universal import which they would be at a loss to describe in words. This spiritual element in Art, then, of which we have so often spoken, we must now proceed to define more closely. Wherein does it consist, and how may its presence be recognised ?

It clearly does not depend upon subject ; for nowhere is spirituality more signally lacking than in many of the so-called religious pictures of later Italian, and indeed European, Art. Can it then exist in subjects that are purely secular ? Is it entirely independent of creeds and dogmas ? What is the criterion to be applied ?

It is perhaps easiest to proceed by way of concrete instances. If, surveying the whole field of Western painting, we can agree upon a category of pictures in which spirituality is admittedly present, and another category from which it is as undeniably absent, we may be able

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between these fixed Poles to arrive at a demarcating line of division.

To the first class we may without hesitation assign the work of many so-called primitive painters. Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Memmi, Fra Angelico, among others in Italy : Roger Van der Weyden, Lucas van Leyden, and the Van Eycks in Flanders, succeeded in expressing religious emotion with a vividness to which, for all its *naïveté*, we cannot for a moment deny spirituality.

To the opposite class we may equally without hesitation assign Rubens, Frans Hals, Velasquez, Manet. With all their unrivalled mastery of technique, the first three (and Manet in his minor place) stopped short at the rendering of outward appearance. Theirs was a universe essentially fleshly and material. External phenomena were their delight ; they were not concerned with any attempt to pry behind the veil.

The former class, it is true, devoted themselves almost entirely to representing

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religious subjects ; but this, as we have seen, need not in itself have given to their work its spiritual element. It is equally clear that their spiritual quality did not lie in technique : for many of these primitive masters only reached so rudimentary a stage of craftsmanship that we are tempted to wonder whether their power of conveying emotion may not have been actually helped by the disproportion between what they wished to express and their technical development. What did give spiritual import to their work was their accent of unmistakable sincerity and conviction. Their whole powers were concentrated upon finding a worthy rendering for the story of the Faith in which they passionately believed. Rubens, too, illustrated the sacred story ; but to him it was merely fresh material for the display of his technical skill.

Thus far our task is easy. It is when we approach more doubtful cases that the difficulty begins. To which class, for instance, are we respectively to assign

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such great names as Titian, Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Tintoret? Was Botticelli spiritual; or Bellini? What are we to say of Rembrandt? and again of Turner? (And these latter raise for us a fresh crop of questions: is pure landscape, for example, to be considered capable of spirituality? and how stands it with portraiture?)

Let us turn again to Mr. Berenson. Speaking of Far-Eastern painters, 'Their saints are frequently hideous,' he says: 'their converted hobgoblins and demons are, as they should be, fiendish; but all are spiritualised through and through, and in every look, in every gesture, manifest the life of the spirit,' whereas 'our painting is apparently powerless to get out of the human figure more than an expression of heroism, of grandeur, of the superhuman—always something in the nature of the physically impressive.' 'We Europeans have been eager enough to represent the inner soul, but we count few successes, for with the rarest excep-

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tions our artists have laid themselves out to failure in at least two ways. They think of representing when they should think of presenting, or they remain fettered to modelling and mass when they should realise that the art of suggestion must depend chiefly upon contour, colour, space-effects, and movement.'

He, that is, who would represent the inner soul must *present*, not represent; and must sacrifice literal and exact rendering to suggestive effects obtainable by other means. Does this view, if we accept it (and the whole course of our inquiry lends it support) help us to the principle of which we are in search? what will be the result of its application to the great painters cited above? In how many of their works shall we discern those rare exceptions where failure to portray the inner soul has been avoided?

So sweeping a pronouncement, rigorously applied, would clearly exclude from the category of the spiritual almost the

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whole of modern Western painting. Our highest-rated achievements have been arrived at through the scientifically contrived illusion of masses and modelling. Only here and there, even among the greater names, could we find instances of spiritual purpose piercing the triumphant rendering of the outer husk. Yet, as we claimed for Tintoret, it is not impossible that this very dexterous handling of external resemblance should be made to enhance the spiritual appeal. True, where we are captured by illusion, there our wonder commonly begins and ends, and we forget to keep open mind to suggestions of wider import. But there are exceptions enough to make us wish for a more comprehensive formula—one within which a rather more generous fraction of our Western painting, despite its truthful imitation of externals, may be brought. We would fain escape the conclusion which Mr. Berenson almost forces on us, that our Art for centuries has been upon a wrong tack ; and we can only do so by

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a definition of the spiritual somewhat less exclusive in its implications.

There are minor forms of Art in which, perhaps, the presence of spirit oftener makes itself felt than in finished oil-painting. These are the works in which expression does not depend on colour, but on line and contour. Here and there, as if by accident, or at any rate with less than the deliberate intention of the Chinese, a Western painter has explored the infinite possibilities of monochrome. In black and white illustration, whether woodcut, etching, pen or pencil drawing, the quality which is wanting for Mr. Berenson in so much of our painting, is often to be found. Who would deny it to many an etching by Dürer or Rembrandt? The slightest work may have it; witness, for instance, Dürer's knight in armour on horseback, his face turned towards the sunset, his lance at rest, his whole attitude expressing religious adoration, awe, and thankfulness. Witness the return of the

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Prodigal, and, among more elaborate works, the marvellous ‘Melancholia.’ Similarly, many an unfinished drawing—a mere hasty dash of pen or pencil lines upon the paper—may waft us straightway into the purer atmosphere of spirit. The gentlest touch, if there be magic in the fingers, will awaken imagination and forthwith set it about building for itself.

Here, then, is a clue. Clearly we have mystery as an ingredient of the spiritual—the need for the unexpressed, for the outline to be filled in.

But this is only one element: mystery alone will not suffice. We must be made to feel that the work brings us into relation with a definite and comprehensive system; that it portrays no isolated fact, but belongs to an universal whole. Will this, then, offer a solution? Shall we say that a picture which is felt to be universal is also spiritual: in short, that the two terms are synonymous?

Let us look at the matter more closely.

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‘Universality,’ says Professor Bernard Bosanquet, ‘lies in the expression of the nature of a system by each and all of its parts suitably to the place or function of each.’ ‘System’ is the keynote here. There must be reference to a whole in which the part, while expressing it, is comprehended. A phenomenon which is felt to be isolated, to stand alone, can lay no claims to a share in the universal. Applying this principle to Art, we should probably find the works of which it could at once be said that they expressed the *nature of the system* to which they belonged, to be comparatively rare. Indeed in every branch of Art, the works having an universal character are rare. It is the character which alone enables them to withstand the test of time. Why else is Homer as fresh to-day as when his songs first were chanted? Why is a statue of Pheidias or Praxiteles or Michael Angelo still able to quicken the beating of a modern heart? Hamlet and Falstaff are uni-

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versal, because they make us feel as their background a system, a universe, for which they stand, and which each in his own way expresses. But obviously they need not, for that, be spiritual.

And so with pictures. A group of peasants by Jan Steen or Teniers 'expresses the nature of the system': gives us for all time a picture of the universe which presented itself to a Dutch peasant of the seventeenth century and was expressed in his life: but though such a picture can be claimed to possess universality, it would require supreme ingenuity to find in it a spiritual element. So the two terms are not by any means synonymous: but as with mystery, so here, we may say that universality is an ingredient of the spiritual in Art. Our definition, then, must be so framed as to include both. We may be helped, perhaps, in framing it by returning to one or two subsidiary questions which, it will be remembered, we left unanswered.

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Is landscape by itself, we asked, to be considered capable of spirituality? And what of portraiture?

The works of Nature, taken as they come, as they would be reflected in a mirror or upon a photographic plate, are too inchoate and haphazard, it would seem, to contain a soul. They are mere *disjecta membra*, devoid of order, owing such beauty as they have to chance. We need not look for the spiritual here. But what when they have passed an artist's scrutiny, and his eye has pierced and sifted and rearranged, and taught his fingers to let slip the unessential and give prominence to the facts that count? Do they not then become a new creation, reflecting a mood of the artist's soul, a mood, it may be, in which all the deepest emotions of our nature have their place? Are we to deny that such an achievement, though it represent but the inanimate, may be spiritualised until it awakens in the spectator's soul that emotion which was already in its

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creator's? De Koninck, gazing out upon a vast expanse of plain, here flecked with sunlight, there swept by a passing shower, divided with roads and waterways, dotted with farms and hamlets, felt in all this a soul, and gave it outward semblance. And Corot wooed and captured the shy elusive spirit that haunts the dew-besprinkled woodlands in the dawn and lurks at twilight in the darkling glades. So, too, to Crome was revealed the beauty of barren heaths and open trackless spaces, and their soul responded to his brush: and Turner, contemplating the incomparable pageant of the skies, divined the mystery of cities not made with hands, and built himself among them a habitation and a home; and so Whistler gave form and substance to the moonlight's silvery radiance mirrored in tranquil water. Is there not spirit in all these? And if this be true of inanimate nature, how much the more when a great painter is concerned with the portrayal of a human

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being, and can look into the soul and fathom the secret springs from whence proceed the waters of love and hatred, courage and hope and endurance, evil and jealousy and despair? Man's soul is but the battle-field, evolved through unnumbered ages, on which these elemental forces wage their unending warfare: and the painter whose Art can catch and reveal to us a glimpse of these hidden depths of life may assuredly claim the attribute of spirituality for his work.

There are yet other problems to solve. Are we to exclude entirely those graceful fantasies in which Botticelli chose to clothe the ancient classic myths? In his hands they wear so little of substance, so much of fancy, that we might surely give them admittance where the more fleshly Venetian rendering must be denied. And Watteau? There is little of earth about his courtly figures in their shimmering silks and satins, taking their ease in stately parks and by gushing fountains, in a world which care and toil and evil

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had clearly never approached. The scenes he loved to paint might well be taken from the very life of that enchanted Pays de Cythère, for which, in one of his greatest works, we see his characters embarking.

All lovers of painting, doubtless, have some special artist or picture, for whom they would fain claim admittance. For one it will be Puvis de Chavannes, evoking for us, through the rhythmical groupings of his figures and the breadth of their cool tones, memories of a simpler Arcadian life. For another it may be some Whistler rendering of a haunt of vanished revelry—Cremorne Gardens, perhaps—where shadowy figures exquisitely attired seem to float upon the grass, and from a phantom orchestra are wafted through our dreamland the dance-tunes of an earlier age. A third will urge, perchance, the claims of some youthful Pre-Raphaelite work, whose arduous and elaborate finish bears little trace of the white-heat of enthusiasm

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which kindled the Brotherhood to their task. Let us take for an instance Holman Hunt's 'Hireling Shepherd'—that joyous rendering of early summer, when life is a-riot in the shrill green of the trees and grass, in the gambolling lambs and the circling swallows: when the air is laden with sweet odours, and white fleecy clouds sail in an azure sky, and sap is rising, and the shepherdess and her swain are drawn within the enchantment that mother Nature casts over all that lives on such a day.

How can we hope to find a formula by the help of which so many and so different claims can be weighed and judged! Whatever the definition, there must clearly be wide scope left for the personal factor in each case. Still, the ground has been so far cleared that a general principle to which, allowing for differences of taste, particular instances may be referred, should not be unattainable.

Let us examine the problem in the

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light of that Art to which, in ancient times, all others were content to minister—the drama. When, we must ask, has the Dramatic Art most fully transcended the limits of actuality and attained to the spiritual? And I suppose there would be little hesitation in answering :—in the hands of the Greek tragedians, and in some of the tragedies of Shakespeare. In presence of the great figures created by Æschylus, by Sophocles, by Shakespeare, we are filled with awe. These are types of human nature raised to a power far above our ordinary level. Yet never, perhaps, do we feel our own humanity more intensely than when it is presented to us at its highest through the medium of these great conceptions. We rejoice to share a common nature with Œdipus and Agamemnon, Lear and Othello. In a flash we see ourselves possessed of higher and unsuspected powers, capable of heroic deeds, sinning as well as suffering on a grander scale than our wont. These beings we do not

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feel to be any the less real that they are more magnificent ; rather the reverse. Their creator, in short, carries us with him, out of our cramped atmosphere and into a rarer air : and we make the transition without an effort, and rejoice to fill our lungs so freely.

At its best, this is perhaps the intensest of all artistic pleasures ; we emerge from such an experience in a mood of exaltation which may last for hours, and even days. By contrast with the mood begotten in us by a good comedy, it is solemn, even a trifle oppressive ; but it wells up from greater depths. For comedy must lag more closely at the heels of the life we know—the life of the counting-house, the street, and the drawing-room. It must keep an eye upon the foibles and the littlenesses of mankind ; it must copy closely, and its portraits must be easy of recognition. Externals, indeed, rather than essentials, are apt to be its chief concern ; for by the former a cheap

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resemblance is the more easily achieved. But the result is that we feel our own personality contract rather than, as in the former case, expand. Then our self-consciousness was enhanced ; now it is diminished. For this humdrum daily life is just that from which we most wish to escape. We know these things by heart, and the faint joy of recognising them is one that speedily palls. Not so when we are carried away, and discover ourselves possessed of new and exciting possibilities.

Now it is to be noted that the medium chosen by the greatest dramatists for their creations has invariably been poetry, and not prose : and in this fact there is a profound significance, perhaps not without its bearing on our own problem.

Prose, being the language of our daily life, tends to confine our footsteps to earth. It restricts us to imitation and demands that the imitation be close enough for easy recognition. Thus it chains us to externals ; whereas poetry

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moulds externals to the exigences of the vast rhythmic movements of Being. To soar to the plane of the great heroic characters we must transcend common experiences and escape from our ordinary state. The mere fact of poetry being the medium makes this easier, for at a blow it knocks off many of the fetters that bound us and frees us to spread our wings for flight into the upper air. It is as if the very flow of rhythmical language set the spiritual chords in us vibrating.

So we find that in drama, as in painting, close imitation of externals, too literal a transcription of fact, is inevitably a bar to the spiritual: and further, that poetry—that is language rhythmically ordered—serves to induce the mood in which we recognise and welcome the higher manifestations of human nature. In M. Bergson's view, once more, we are hypnotised by it into a state of receptivity.

Are there in painting, too, no corre-

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sponding differences of treatment? We have the literal following of fact, which even when raised to the *n*th power of technique, must always remain prose. Is there not also a poetry of painting through which we are magically brought into instant relation with the spiritual? It is surely not far to seek. What else is the quality informing some of those dreamlike phantasies in which Turner unveiled a more than earthly beauty of sea and sky? What else are Botticelli's wistful, frail Madonnas? Is it not to be found in almost every subject that Giorgione touched—in many a Rembrandt portrait, or a Whistler nocturne? It is written upon that wondrously pathetic figure of Adam in the Sistine Chapel, and in the far-off, awe-struck gaze of Raphael's Madonna at Dresden. All these are surely spiritual if ever painting was. Then how is their common quality to be defined? In each case, if we consider it closely, we shall find that it is a living personal experience

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of his own that the painter is representing ; for this is a thing that even the least expert picture-lover feels instinctively and at once. How different these from the rhetoric and conventionality of nearly all later religious Art, when painters set about representing emotions which by universal consent men ought to feel, but which, in actual fact, they had long since ceased feeling. The result was wearisome iteration of the same themes, treated again and again without conviction, representing no genuine emotion of the painter's own, and only of interest to him in so far as they could be made the vehicle for the display of his technical skill.

But in the instances we have cited it is very different. In each case here we can feel at once that we are sharing in the painter's emotion. He is communicating to us something that he himself has felt deeply : and further, it is something through which we are transported beyond the common experi-

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ence of earth, to a region where without surprise we become aware of strange presences and the beat of angels' wings.

This may perhaps give us the definition we are seeking. Shall we say that that Art is spiritual in which the Artist succeeds in communicating to others his own genuine sense of a world beyond actualities? Let us see how this definition will stand testing by our concrete instances. Turner, in those hints of superhuman beauty, those suggestions of a 'light that never was, on sea or land,' was but giving expression to an emotion, and a vision far beyond that of common man. To him the heavens had opened, and the glory of the Lord appeared. So Botticelli, when he looked into the eyes, and fathomed the very depths of womanhood, and saw there the yearning, and the wonder, and the frailty, the apprehension of sorrow, the shrinking from life's burdens, and the courage to accept them: and Giorgione, shedding a glamour of romance on all he touched—

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the Holy Mother and Child, or a peasant lad with his flute, or the sleeping Goddess of Love, or one of those pastoral scenes enfolded in the setting of a glowing Venetian landscape: they, both, had surely for a time transcended the things of earth. And so had Rembrandt, in those portraits from whose soul all the troubled lot of humanity looks forth, with a weariness half reproachful and yet patient, and a courageous waiting for the end. And do we not all know that mystery of tranquil moonlit nights, when not a breath stirs, and the world is bathed with silvery radiance, and the heart within us stands still for awe and wonder, and we become aware of a new serenity of spirit telling us that *this* is the reality, and not the heated strivings of the day? In such moments eternity is round us—we are in a mood of which Whistler alone has seized the very spirit, and given it permanence. How can we deny spirituality to such work as this? Of Michael Angelo's Adam or Raphael's

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Madonna we need not speak, for their claim is beyond all question. So that, tested by concrete instances, our definition seems to hold good. This world beyond actualities is universal ; for it is apprehended as the completion and the fulfilment of what before was incomplete, expressed in scattered hints. It is wrapped in mystery ; but in a mystery from which the veil seems always on the point of lifting, and to which each fresh development of the human faculties seems to give promise of a nearer approach. It is an ideal, an aspiration, an asylum from suffering, and a goal for endeavour. It resolves the hard-and-fastness of crude facts, and looses the bonds of self. To this land of Promise the Art that is spiritual opens the gates and bids us enter.

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‘There is in us a beauty-sense, separate from the other senses and above them, separate from the reason and of nobler import, separate from the soul and of equal value—a sense that leads some to create, and others, the finer spirits, as I think, to contemplate merely.’—WILDE.

X. TRAINING OF THE SENSE OF BEAUTY

IT remains but to draw the scattered threads together and sum up. We set out with the intent to investigate some of the reasons for the fall of Art—and the Art of painting particularly—from its high estate. There was no need to show how small a part it plays in the life of to-day ; the fact is self-evident. Our contention was that Art was more than ever necessary as a make-weight to the prevalent materialism in whose onward course, so far from stemming, itself has been swept along. A comparison with the Art of the East led us to surmise that lack of influence and lack of spirituality were not unconnected. Here we are content with imitation, with literal transcription ; we

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cling to fact and make truthful resemblance our criterion of artistic success. The East occupies itself with inner significance, with the hidden import and soul of things, and shapes their outer casing as best may suit to body them forth. Dealing in turn with the training of vision, with imagination, the unseen world, the power of suggestion and the spiritual, we found that each fresh result of our inquiry helped to make good this central position—that the widest and most permanent appeal of Art is to and through Spirit.

And now there are objections to be met.

‘Granted,’ it will be said, ‘that all this is true: that painting has known better days, when it meant much to the educated, and something even to the rude. Granted that the spiritual element was then less lacking; the wants of those dark times of superstition and ignorance were easily fed. Our age both knows and needs more; it has practical evils to redress, humanitarian claims to meet,

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serious interests to think about. While there remains so much to reform, there is no time for this dilettantism and self-indulgence—for the love of Art is little else. It is necessarily denied to the people, and it is the people now of whom we have to think. And even if you could infuse more of spirituality into the painter's work, do you really believe its appeal would be wider? The plain man never has understood or felt the need of art, and never will: the plain man is in the majority, even among your so-called educated class. He was in the majority—we can see it from his treatment at the hands of Aristophanes—even in the great age of Pericles: and no doubt he was equally in the majority in Renaissance Italy. Did he not stone Michael Angelo's David as it was drawn to its place before the Palazzo Vecchio? The plain man has plain needs. To you he will be a Vandal and a Philistine to the end of time. You must accept the fact and make the best of it.'

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Must we accept the fact? Those who think so would do well to read a book in which one who has spent thirty years upon the work of elementary education in this country sets forth the results of his experience. (*What is and What Might Be*, Edmond Holmes).

If I mistake not, Mr. Holmes would hotly resist the contention that Vandalism is the natural and inevitable attitude of the normal man towards beauty, whether in Art or Nature. It is admitted, he says, 'implicitly, if not directly, by all who speak and think about education, and even, in their unguarded moments, by most of those who teach . . . that such special qualities as literary or artistic taste, the mathematical or the historical sense, an aptitude for business or finance, are ready to evolve themselves in response to the fostering influence of practical experience directed by skilful teaching. It is admitted, in other words, that there is much in human nature, apart from what is purely or

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mainly physical, which is both capable and worthy of cultivation, and which education ought therefore to try to cultivate.'

The contention of the whole book, which is an indictment of Western conceptions of education, both in its aims and methods, is that the natural being is born capable and desirous of growth, of expansion outwards and upwards, if man will but second the intentions of Nature. The child's natural tendency is towards good and not towards evil. Give him the advantages that every gardener gives his plants, of environment, artificial stimulus and wise pruning, and Mr. Holmes contends that he will attain to fulness of growth, æsthetic, as well as moral and physical. On the other hand, start from the doctrine of original sin, with the aim of eradicating an imaginary inborn impulse towards evil, and you will stunt and repress, as Mr. Holmes contends that Western Education in effect does.

It is worth while to follow the argu-

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ments of this remarkable book more closely. It attributes to the normal child six expansive instincts or desires : the desire, namely :—

- ‘ (1) To talk and listen :
- (2) to act (in the dramatic sense of the word) :
- (3) to draw, paint, and model :
- (4) to dance and sing :
- (5) to know the why of things :
- (6) to construct things.’

They are desires the existence of which most of us can verify from our own observation.

The first two are linked together as the ‘sympathetic instinct’ :

the second two as the ‘æsthetic instinct’ :

the last two as the ‘scientific instinct.’

In most of these instincts Mr. Holmes finds that the child is checked rather than encouraged by the Western system of education ; and his statement has reference not merely to elementary

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schools, but to the education which our Public Schools and Universities give to such as can afford it. By its system of rewards and punishments it has developed a spirit of competition which makes self-seeking in one form or another not only a legitimate but a necessary consequence ; which makes success its goal, and essential growth of little account ; which gives to the successful an opinion of their abilities, and to the failures of their shortcomings, probably alike misleading. Of the six expansive instincts, only the first—the communicative—receives any adequate development ; and this only for those few who have carried their study of the classics to the point of finding in them literary enjoyment. Specialisation in one subject or group of subjects, where the remaining needs are neglected, only means one-sided development. Atrophy of the æsthetic and scientific instincts means the dwarfing of sympathy and imagination. The examination system puts a premium on the kind of ability which goes with

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retentiveness of memory and receptivity to information in shallow layers: and the cramming that it necessitates not infrequently begets in the process of assimilation a permanent distaste for 'the memorable doings and the imperishable sayings,' which become to the student, not 'things to be imagined and felt, admired and loved, wondered at and pondered over, but things to be pigeon-holed in his memory, to be taken out and arranged under headings, to be dissected and commented on and criticised.'

Such are some of the terms of Mr. Holmes's indictment, in themselves familiar enough to most students of education. What makes them noteworthy is the fact that he is able to set off against them a concrete instance in which a precisely contrary system has led, in actual working, to results which the most sanguine theorist would hardly have dared to predict.

The case cited is one in which the mistress of an elementary school, in a

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part of England proverbially slow-witted, was able by means of very different educational methods to diffuse throughout a whole district the radiations of her own enlightenment. Her aims, in a sentence, may be summed up as 'education through self-reliance and self-expression': and her achievement has been so startling that the results, for which Mr. Holmes vouches, must surely, as they become known, help the rearing of a new fabric in the place of the old decrepit structure of education. To quote the author's own words: 'possibilities (as I may now call them) which I might perhaps have dismissed on a priori grounds as too fantastic for serious consideration, have become part of the everyday life of the scholars.' Let us hear him further upon the actual results of this school, which he names 'Utopia,' and 'Egeria' its mistress:—

'The Utopian child is alive, alert, active, full of latent energy, ready to act, to do things, to turn his mind to things, to turn his hand to things, to

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turn his desire to things, to turn his whole being to things. There is no trace in this school of the mental lethargy which, in spite of the ceaseless activities of the teachers, pervades the atmosphere of so many elementary schools: no trace of the fatal inertness on the part of the child, which is the outcome of five or six years of systematic repression and compulsory inaction. The air of the school is electrical with energy. We are obviously in the presence of an active, vigorous life.' 'A stranger,' he says, 'is struck at the first glance by the brightness of joy reflected from the faces of the children.' There is need, it seems, for neither punishment nor reward: 'joy in their work, pride in their school, devotion to their teacher, are sufficient incentives to industry.' These influences show themselves in the very bearing of the children, which is free alike from 'aggressive familiarity and uncouth shyness.' 'They welcome the stranger as a friend, take his good-will for granted,

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take him into their confidence, and show him, tactfully and unostentatiously, many pretty courtesies.' Lastly—and this for our inquiry is all-important—their love of natural beauty is developed in an altogether uncommon degree. 'The æsthetic sense of the Utopian child has not been deliberately trained, but it has been allowed, and even encouraged, to unfold itself; and the appeal that beauty makes to the heart meets in consequence with a ready response.'

This reads like the description of an imaginary Utopia rather than of a prosaic English school in a stolid southern county; yet this author has personal knowledge of the facts. It is, indeed, from reflecting on them that he claims to have derived 'whatever modicum of wisdom in matters educational' he may possess.

By what means, then, has there been brought about in this simple village school a condition of things which centuries of theorising about

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educational matters have utterly failed to achieve elsewhere? Mr. Holmes answers the question in a sentence: the better and higher nature of the children has been allowed to evolve itself freely, naturally, and under favourable conditions. That this nature exists, and predominates, is the assumption on which the whole system is based. 'The child's life is one of unimpeded, though duly guided and stimulated activity.' The six instincts of which we spoke, and which the author names the *expansive* instincts, are in turn nourished and fostered. The 'communicative,' by the encouragement systematically given the children to relate their experiences, listen to those of others, ask questions and give their views. The dramatic by frequent opportunities of acting;—not only episodes of History, but scenes ingeniously made to illustrate other subjects of study, whereby at once the love of acting, innate in every child,

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receives a stimulus, and the powers of the imagination are set in motion. To foster the artistic instinct the children are taught first to use their powers of vision on simple objects, and then to reproduce them from their own observation, without the aid of mechanical guidance such as usually deprives elementary drawing of all educative value.

The fourth instinct—that of music—is trained by the practice of Old English Folk Songs and Morris dances ; also by good music, played to the children by their mistress in unoccupied or quiet moments. The inquisitive instinct is not only encouraged to the utmost in obvious ways, but is made use of for surmounting obstacles imposed by the child's own limitations. Every new scene to be acted, or Folk Song to be interpreted, involves the need of fresh knowledge ; thus curiosity is constantly aroused, and enabled to satisfy itself. Still more is this the case in the study

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of natural objects, which lends itself *par excellence* to the training of the powers of observation. Lastly, the constructive instinct. The children are taught to turn their hands to any practical contrivances needful for their games, their acting, their gardens or their toys ; ‘ At every turn the Utopian child is being called upon to plan and contrive.’ Self-reliance and versatility are of course the result.

Carried out by a Mistress of genius, these principles would seem to result in a many-sided development which endures not only during school life, but (what is, after all, the only test) afterwards. ‘ So strong, indeed, and so steady is the current that it maintains its movement long after the child has left school. The employers of labour in the neighbourhood of Utopia will tell you that there are no slackers or loafers in the yearly output of the school.’ It would be beyond our purpose to attempt to go into details which

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are well worth seeking in the book itself. Self-expression and self-reliance give the key-notes. The first is the condition of all growth. 'The perceptive faculties (at any rate in childhood) grow through the interpretation which expression gives them, and in no other way. And the expressive faculties grow by interpreting perception and in no other way.' It is, indeed, a truism that the best way of clearing the ideas on any subject is to put them on paper; or even to expound them to somebody unacquainted with the subject. Expression achieved in either of these ways, the perceptive faculties can set to work with renewed strength upon further investigation. The Utopian training, as we have seen, is entirely devised with a view of bringing the powers of expression to their full perfection, and of developing self-reliance and resourcefulness. As to these latter qualities, it is clear that they can only be evolved in actual practice; and such practice

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the Utopian training manages to provide. Sailors possess them in greater measure than other men for no other reason than that they are entrusted, from an earlier age, with a greater measure of responsibility ; and in every walk of life these qualities bear an almost mathematical ratio to responsibility.

It is only, of course, in so far as it bears on our own particular problem that we are concerned with the Utopian experiment. We were confronted with the objection, so widely held, that the plain man is, and until the end of time will remain, a Philistine, inaccessible to artistic pleasures, submerged, and inevitably submerged, in practical affairs, in fact with the serious concerns of life. Whether mankind is capable of guidance in the matter of its enjoyments is a question implicitly answered in the negative by those who hold this view ; yet the Utopian experience directly contradicts them. It is not to the

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point to argue that this actual instance is due to the genius of a particular teacher and only provides the required exception to the rule; for what has been proved possible in one case may happen in all. The important point is that here, in a particular English village, education has been so carried on as to raise the intellectual, moral and æsthetic level of a whole district. On this latter point, which is for us the chief interest, hear Mr. Holmes's testimony again: 'The Utopian child has gradually strengthened and deepened his perceptive powers, till his sight has transformed itself into insight, and form and colour have come to be interpreted by him through the medium of the beauty which is behind them—his feeling of beauty having, little by little, been awakened and evolved by his unceasing efforts to interpret the *vraie vérité* of form and colour, which, as he now begins to learn, are beauty's outward self.'

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In every field of human energy, from metaphysics to the swinging of a hammer, special faculties can be developed by constant effort and close attention; and many faculties may be developed simultaneously in a lesser but still valuable degree: then why not among them the faculty of enjoying beauty?

‘Utopia’ gives us what we want—the power to point to a definite concrete instance of what had hitherto remained in the field of theory, and Utopian theory at that. It proves that in average human beings, of material commonly considered unpromising, the æsthetic faculty may be evolved along with other faculties. Without being carried to a very subtle point, it may yet succeed in adding very considerably to, and elevating, the sum of human pleasures. And it will have a direct civilising value; for acquaintance with these pleasures of the mind must inevitably render complete satisfaction by the grosser pleasures more difficult. If

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in a simple village school, in a district where the average of mental capacity is low, the love of beauty can be so successfully awakened, who can doubt that with similar tending the same rare plant might attain an universal footing? and once established it will spread. In New York, little more than a decade since, a somewhat analogous experiment was carried out, not among children, but among full-grown men. A great scholar and educationalist, better known in America than in his native land, Thomas Davidson, undertook to devote an evening a week to the instruction of a class formed chiefly from among Jewish working men in a poor district of New York. The members of this class, heterogeneous in age, occupation, nationality and sex, had only in common a desire for knowledge; and Davidson's principle, as in our Utopian village, was to put upon his pupils themselves the greater part of the work. He did not seek to transplant knowledge full-grown from his mind to

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theirs, but relied upon their individual effort to raise it from the seed he sowed. He placed within their reach the books necessary for a fuller acquaintance with the subject on which he had first sought to arouse curiosity, and left the rest to them, criticising and correcting their papers, and gradually promoting the more competent to play the rôle of critic for beginners. His aim was 'to give them such an outlook upon life as would lift their lives out of narrowness and sordidness, and give them ideal aims.' With this object he sought, gradually and imperceptibly, to build up in their minds 'a panorama of social evolution in all its phases, intellectual, moral, religious, political, economical, artistic, literary.' Under the headings of biographies, definitions, maps, races, epochs, and world religions, and recitation, he endeavoured to implant among the class by degrees the conception of a general scheme of things in which they might view 'the problems of the present from the stand-

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point of universal history.' The setting of subjects for essays and the consideration of the papers written for them, generally led to discussions in which the definition of elementary things—justice, nature, matter, duty, institution, and the like—were called for from the class itself. In a few months the numbers had doubled; and before the end of a year eight classes had taken the place of the original one. 'We had,' says Davidson himself, 'classes in Latin and Greek, taught by a distinguished Harvard graduate; classes in algebra, geometry, and universal history, taught by a very gifted member of my class, one who had spent the summer with me; a class in comparative religion, taught by the superintendent of the (Educational) Alliance; a class in natural science, taught by an able young physician; and finally, my own class in Faust. Each class met once a week.' Subsequently a class on the history of philosophy was undertaken by Davidson himself. To give an idea of its scope it

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will suffice to mention some of the subjects on which essays were written. 'The Social Conditions which gave rise to Reflection; Nature *versus* Convention; The Origin of the term Nature; Theology *versus* Science; the Different Schools of Philosophy, their Distinguishing Characteristics and their Interrelation,' etc.

The history of this experiment has, it is true, except by analogy, no direct bearing upon our subject of painting. But it is proof conclusive, if proof be needed, of man's susceptibility to guidance in the matter of his interests and enjoyments. A movement so simply instituted among the poorest wage-earners, having as its object an education in the truest sense of the word liberal, out-living its founder and growing into an organisation of many branches, which still exists and flourishes, speaks for itself. What has thus been achieved among plain men on the side of intellect, can equally be achieved on the side of beauty. The function of education is to keep this, along with the other

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expressive instincts, from falling into atrophy. It is active, as we know, in children ; and surely it was not intended to remain rudimentary and superfluous—a sort of caudal appendix of the mind ? The eagerness with which the opportunities of artistic instruction, offered nowadays by some of the more enlightened firms to their employees, are clutched, proves the contrary.

The love of beauty is there in embryo ; but more than any other faculty, perhaps, it stands in need of tending and care and guidance in its development.

A National Art, to be of wide and general appeal, must make its entry in the schools, and from the first stand in direct and easily recognisable relation to nature. It must crystallise and enshrine the fleeting moments whose evanescent beauty escapes our halting powers of observation. It must select and emphasise and underline, setting the essential apart and letting go the rest.

True, the instances before us were

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each the work of individual genius ; and genius is as rare among teachers as elsewhere. But a track once blazed is easy to follow ; and soon thickets are trampled down, rocks removed and a beaten highway appears, on which, in a day, any tramper can go the distance that cost its first pioneer a week.

Only Egerias can perform miracles ; yet it needs no Egeria to teach the child not to take for granted, but to view as the wonder that it is, each fresh stage in the progress of the advancing year, from the earliest primrose, and the first black-bird's evening song, to the fulness of autumn, when the dark frame-work of the trees again shows through a glory of gold and russet, and fruits are gathered in, and a sense of labour ended creeps upon men and things.

We are, most of us, creatures of habit, content to trudge along the beaten track, to perform the allotted task, our eyes fixed on the ground, our thoughts wandering. We need to be forced to look up and

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examine closer the components of the environment which we habitually regard no further than suffices for its adjustment to the machinery of our lives. But once we have looked and noted, each fresh scrutiny reveals new marvels in the common objects which go to make up the work-a-day attire of Mother Earth. Who that has once examined them can look unwondering on the structure of the meanest hedgerow plant, the smallest insect? The markings of a butterfly's wing or a horse-chestnut, the swallow's flight, the silver dust of blackthorn in the hedges, the fragrance of the first warm night, the song of the lark, are each as pregnant with beauty, as rich in matter for thought, as the pageant of the clouds or the patines of bright gold upon the wine-blue vault of heaven. Who can remain blind to beauty that has once thrilled before the wonder of a majestic beech-tree, brave in its tender leafage, like a vast three-decker under full spread of canvas, scenting the gale that sets it all a-rustle, each leaf a

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little sail, stretched taut upon the slender net-work of its ribs, the whole minute fabric, to its downy edges, transparent against the sun? or standing four square to the winds of winter, its gnarled and knotted members clutching the soil, its massy bole standing out all silver from the comfortable carpet of its own red leaves?

From the beauty of natural things to the beauty of Art is a transition that follows in its due sequence. The Nymph that roamed unfettered and unadorned through the woodlands must needs at first look cramped and awkward in the strait formality of court attire. Only by degrees does the eye become accustomed to the rich figurings of so artificial an adornment; and only by degrees does the latter make its own, and enhance the worth of, the natural things it borrowed to remodel. And even by this means, perhaps, was the beauty of natural objects first revealed; for the eye, arrested by their novelty, turns to the

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original with reawakened interest. And thus the debt is repaid.

How can the step be taken? Egeria is ready with the answer. The eye must be trained, by a process as careful as that which develops the muscles of the athlete, the palate of the wine-taster, the porcelain-lover's sense of touch; the process, in fact, which creates in every expert almost a new faculty. The eye must be trained, by the observation of simple form and the effort to reproduce it. From this first step the way to further development is slow, but straight and simple and continuous; and as in all else, sustained effort is the condition of success. Mere concentration upon form, even if the fingers never attain dexterity in its reproduction, will develop the habit of observation which, once implanted, draws nourishment from itself. In childhood must be sown whatever seeds are to be of life-long benefit: and the love of beauty, natural and artistic, with the rest. 'Until the musical and

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artistic instincts of the masses are systematically trained in our elementary schools,' says Mr. Holmes, 'through the medium of free self-expression on the part of the children, we shall have neither a national music nor a national art.'

A national Art! The phrase evokes the vision of a time in which, as universal as the rising of flood-waters over a wide plain, or the coming of spring, or the inrush of the tide far and wide along the indentations of a coast, spontaneously and naturally, the love of beauty will be born again. It hints at a rebirth as vigorous in remote villages and forgotten corners of the land as in great centres: when, seemingly without effort or preconcerted action, the commoner requisites of life of themselves will take on forms of beauty, and the artistic spirit, in incarnations innumerable, find its scope in ministering to every-day needs, even to the fashioning of humble objects, of household vessels and doorknockers and bells, and to the designing of tables and chairs and

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cabinets. Visions, too, of a new uprising of great guilds of artists, setting traditions for districts and localities to adopt or modify according to their fancy ; ready to undertake works of construction and decoration, or to lend supervision to local efforts. Visions of churches and schools and public buildings once more adorned with decoration appropriate to the needs of their users—with mural paintings, perhaps, dealing, in illuminating symbolism, with the work, the diversions and the ideals of the people. There would be found subjects varying from fairy-tales and allegories, through the whole range of national fiction, to actual episodes of history, and the actual pursuits of the day. Carving, too, there would be, in stone and wood, skilled work in metal and in clay ; and little by little all the stiff mechanism of an age of science would be softened by a gracious yet befitting habiliment. Once again man would seek to clothe all his handiwork in forms of beauty, discarding by

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instinct the uncomely, and overcoming material problems with an ingenuity proportional to their difficulty.

Such visions have been dreamed by many dreamers, among whom Ruskin and Morris were neither the first nor the last. Will they be always dreams? A national Art, it is very certain, must be preceded by a wide-spread searching after forms of beauty; eyes must be opened first and the new gift of vision sedulously trained and fostered; and then who knows but the demand for beautiful form may spread even to the things of common life?

There is one more desideratum, as we have seen—the Art which would make universal appeal must convey to others its sense of the existence of a world beyond actualities. How can we better give the conclusion of the whole matter than by adapting to Art the words which Plato, so many centuries ago, put into the lips of Socrates?

‘He who would proceed aright in this

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matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms : and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright—to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts : and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another ; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish will he be not to recognise that the beauty in every form is one and the same ! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms ; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the inward is more honourable than the beauty of the outward form. . . .

‘ He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes towards the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty . . . absolute,

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separate, simple, and everlasting, which, without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who under the influence of true love rising upward from these begins to see that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. . . .

‘ What if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality, and all the colours and vanities of human life—thither looking and holding converse with the

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true beauty, divine and simple? Do you not see that in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image, but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may.'

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